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ESSENTIALS IN ART









AN ARHAT. INDIA-INK PAINTING BY HSUEH-AN (ABOUT 1300)
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5
ESSENTIALS IN ART
BY OSVALD SIRÉN, PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF
ART AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
STOCKHOLM WITH NUMEROUS
ILLUSTRATIONS ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

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FOREWORD

OF the five essays united in this volume the first one, "Rhythm and Form," is the most recent and the nearest expression for the author's present studies and interests on the field of art. It was originally written as a kind of introduction to some essays on Chinese painting, published 1917 in Swedish, but as it is built on ideas which have a bearing on artistic creation in general it may be of interest even without any further application on Eastern painting. It has also been considerably changed and enlarged since its first publication.

The other essays are older and of a more limited historical character. They date from the years 1912-1914 when the author was mainly occupied with Italian art, which here is considered in its relation to the religious and classic inspiration inherent in the Renaissance. Their æsthetic elements are perhaps incidental rather than fundamental, but they aim at the explanation of purely artistic values and touch upon essential elements in Renaissance art. This is particularly true of the essay "The Importance of the Antique to Donatello," which originally was published in a shorter form in the "American Journal of Archæology" (1914); it

deals with the most central problem in the history of Renaissance sculpture. The last essay, "A Late Gothic Poet of Line," which is reprinted from the "Burlington Magazine" (1914); only with the addition of some foot-notes, throws some new light on one of the most characteristic representatives of the Gothic manner which continued to live long after the early Renaissance masters had established their new ideals.

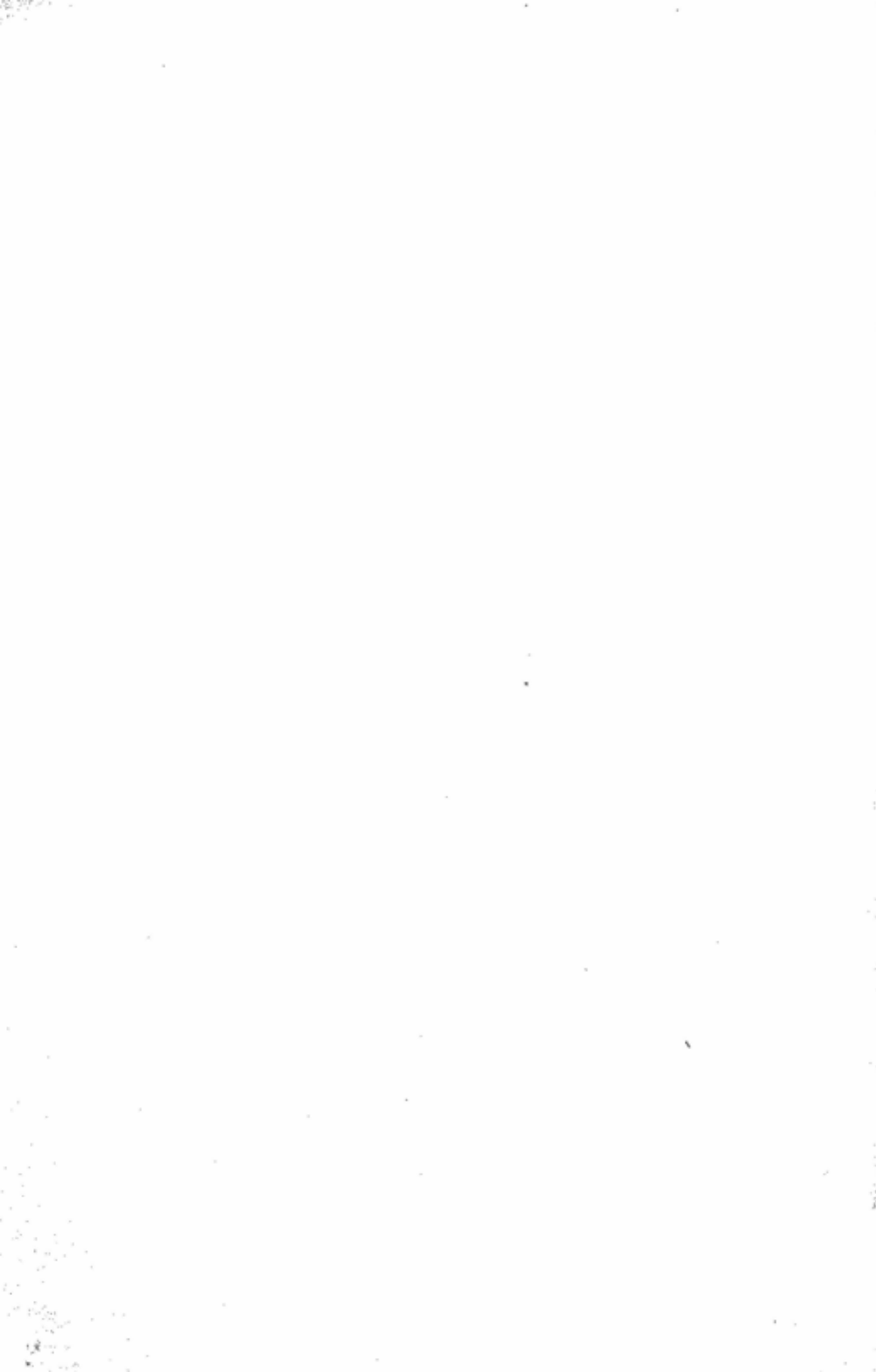
In the writing of these essays at different periods the author has had the valuable assistance of different English and American friends who have improved the linguistic form for his ideas, but as many parts have been changed again at later occasions, it would not be just to mention names in this connection; only that of Mr. Clive Bell should not be omitted because he has taken an active part in the final arrangement of the book which probably never would have been published but for his particular assistance and encouragement.

O. S.

September, 1919.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	ix
I. RHYTHM AND FORM	1
II. ART AND RELIGION	47
III. ART AND RELIGION DURING THE RENAISSANCE	67
IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE TO DONATELLO	93
V. A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE	127



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

AN *ARHAT*. INDIA-INK PAINTING BY HSUEH-AN
(about 1300) *Frontispiece*

FIG.	TO PAGE PAGE
1. DONATELLO. IL ZUCCONE	98
2. ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK ORIGINAL OF THIRD CENTURY. DEMOSTHENES	98
3. DONATELLO. "POGGIO BRACCIOLINI".	100
4. EARLY ROMAN BUST OF AN OLD MAN	100
5. DONATELLO. "ANTONIO DEI NARNI".	100
6. COPY AFTER POLYCLETUS' DORYPHORUS	100
7. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP. ODYSSEUS AND ATHENA	102
8. DONATELLO. "AMOR"	104
9. GREEK. SECOND CENTURY "AMOR-HERCULES"	104
10. DONATELLO. "AMORINO"	104
11. POMPEIIAN. "PUTTO" WITH A DOLPHIN	104
12. DONATELLO. CHOIR-LOFT FROM THE DUOMO, FLORENCE.	108
13. ROMAN SARCOPHAGUS. UFFIZI, FLORENCE.	108
14. DONATELLO. ANNUNCIATION	110
15. DONATELLO. BRONZE DAVID	112
16. GREEK. FOURTH CENTURY HERMES	112
17. (A and B) PRAXITELEAN EROS FROM NICOPOLIS.	112
18. DONATELLO. MARBLE DAVID	116
19. DONATELLO. SKETCH FOR A DAVID STATUE	116

FIG.		TO FACE PAGE
20.	ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK ORIGINAL OF THE FOURTH CENTURY. ARTEMIS	120
21.	ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK ORIGINAL OF THE FOURTH CENTURY. ARTEMIS OR DIONYSUS.	120
22.	DONATELLO BRONZE MADONNA.	122
23.	ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK ORIGINAL OF THE FIFTH CENTURY. A DANCER	122
24.	DONATELLO. GATTAMELATA, EQUESTRIAN STATUE	124
25.	DONATELLO. HEAD OF GATTAMELATA	126
26.	THE CRUCIFIXION. CHURCH OF THE MISERICORDIA, FIGLINE	130
27.	THE ANNUNCIATION. CHURCH OF THE MISERICORDIA, FIGLINE	132
28.	THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN. CHURCH OF THE MISERICORDIA, FIGLINE	134
29.	ANGEL WITH HAND-ORGAN. CHURCH OF THE MISERICORDIA, FIGLINE	136
30.	MADONNA ON CLOUDS, AND SAINTS	138
31.	SS. MARY MAGDALEN AND LAURENCE	140
32.	MADONNA	142
33.	LORENZO Ghiberti. MADONNA, TERRA-COTTA RELIEF	136
34.	MADONNA	142
35.	MADONNA AND SAINTS. TRIPTYCH	144
36.	MADONNA AND SAINTS. TRIPTYCH	146
37.	ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN	148
38.	DEATH OF THE VIRGIN	148
39.	MADONNA	150
40.	MADONNA	150
41.	THE VIRGIN PROTECTING THE ARETINES	152
42.	S. MICHAEL	154
43.	SPINELLO ARETINO. MADONNA	154
44.	FOUR DRAWINGS BY PARRI SPINELLI	156

I
RHYTHM AND FORM





A. N. 231

RHYTHM AND FORM

I

THE test of art that is most generally applied in the Western World, undoubtedly is fidelity to nature. We Westerners have done our best to bind art down to the world of material phenomena, we have made fidelity of reproduction the highest virtue in painting and sculpture, and have considered that the perfection of art lay in the artist's power to create illusive imitations of nature. Maybe that this ideal nowadays is somewhat out of date, but it still asserts itself in many books dealing with the history of art in which painting and sculpture are appreciated mainly from the point of view of their relation to nature. Nor is this anything new; this tendency has existed in the Western World ever since the full maturity of Greek art; the principle was enunciated by Aristotle, who formulated the theory of the correspondence between the creative function in nature and in art. But this theory has since been vulgarized into the doctrine that likeness to nature constitutes the main basis for a true appreciation of art.

Anyone who has seriously considered this problem will admit the insufficiency and uncertainty of this basis of appreciation, because the popular conception of what is called nature does not rest

ESSENTIALS IN ART

upon direct observation of its phenomena, but upon conventional ideas gradually evolved from successive attempts at reproduction. Usually we see rather through the eyes of our predecessors than through our own, particularly if those predecessors successfully presented and described what they saw. It is really much more difficult than most people imagine to see nature clearly and without prejudice as an artist must see it if his aim is to create an accurate and convincing representation of material phenomena.

Any person who feels convinced that his faculty of observation is sufficiently developed to enable him to decide what is "nature," or what is not, ought to follow the advice of Roger Fry and make a little experiment in the use of this faculty. Let him, for instance, try to draw from memory the trees in a garden which he has often visited, or a door through which he has passed every day, or the wall-paper in his dining-room (if he is fortunate enough to have the surrounding walls covered with an arabesque pattern): he will soon be obliged to admit that his faculty of observation in daily life is very weak. He has perhaps a general idea of how this thing and that may look, he may know enough about them to be able to use them in the right way, but he will be unable to depict their most characteristic and striking traits. Being accustomed to consider all these things as objects of some practical use or purpose and not as ends in themselves, he does not perceive the essential principles that give significance to their forms.

This general incapacity for direct and unbiased observation of things that surround us is a fact that

RHYTHM AND FORM

has been proved over and over again by the attitude of the public towards new movements in art. We perfectly agree with the above-named English painter and critic, who once wrote :

“Ordinary people have hardly any idea of what things really look like, so that oddly enough the one standard that popular criticism applies to painting, namely whether it is like nature or not, is one which most people are by the whole tenor of their lives prevented from applying properly. The only thing they have ever really looked at being other pictures, the moment an artist who has looked at nature brings them a clear report of something definitely seen by him, they are highly indignant at its untruth to nature.”

The popular demand for fidelity to nature implies a popular knowledge of nature, a supposition that evidently rests on very shaky foundations. If we see in art simply a means of reproducing natural phenomena or of expressing thoughts and ideas by the use of light and shade, colours, form or line, the criterion of its merit must apparently be sought in the skill with which the reproduction from nature has been executed and in the quality of the ideas expressed. Art then would be but a more or less beautiful form of imagery in which paint or clay are used to represent something the appearance of which is already familiar to us. This may be a pleasant though somewhat purposeless occupation, a pastime for the contented who are not troubled by imagination or by any ambition to search for the meaning of things, for a reality behind the fair or foul shell of material existence.

Such an attitude towards art hardly enables us to explain the creative faculty of the artist, nor does it facilitate an understanding of that which his

ESSENTIALS IN ART

works are supposed to represent. From this point of view art becomes simply a physical performance, depending on the more or less trained individual faculty of sight and inseparably linked with the changes observed in the world of phenomena.

If we look more closely into this matter we shall have to admit that "nature" does not exist as a concrete, unchangeable reality, but rather as an aggregate of subjective concepts. Its reality to us is entirely dependent upon its relation to our understanding. The phenomena of the material world shift and change according to our moods. That which once perhaps fascinated and impressed us by its evident importance may at another time leave us entirely indifferent. The reason for this is not necessarily that the thing has changed or that it appears in a different light; these conditions may be the same while in the meantime our power of appreciation may have developed.

From the point of view of art, nature exists only in so far as it enters into our consciousness as a concept of colour, form, or function. These are in their turn dependent on our outer and inner experience, our general evolution. Nature—if we hold to this collective expression—is, as a motive for artistic creation, not a constant objective phenomenon or any aggregation of such, but actually a relation between the artist and his visual impressions, a relation which is dependent on many other factors besides that of visual observation. Seeing is not a mechanical but a mental process, and the more conscious and intentional it is, the more is it modified by all kinds of conceptions and associations

RHYTHM AND FORM

of ideas gathered through experience and observation. Naturally this is more particularly true of the artist's sight, which is more purposeful than the observation of ordinary people.

It is really not possible to give a three-dimensional representation on a flat surface or to fix a movement in a picture except in accordance with a definite mental concept which can conform only in a very slight degree with the visual impression. Even the simplest pictorial expression rests on an abstraction deduced from nature, and the more complicated and purposeful the creation, the more it is dependent on the artist's power to make a plausible presentation of his abstraction that shall correspond with our experience and preconception.

Somebody may object that if this is so then generally convincing representations become impossible because experiences and conceptions vary with each individual. But that is not quite the case. Visual observation and the conceptions derived from it are fundamentally similar in the majority of men (within certain limits of time and space) however unequally developed. There are certain general concepts forming, so to speak, the inner material of paintings and sculpture which may be considered as universal because they are inherent in the process of seeing. Adolf Hildebrand, the well-known German sculptor and writer, has defined two of the most important of these in his book "The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture," namely, the concepts of *form* and *function*. They designate two different sides of our faculty for making these abstractions from nature, and as they are of

ESSENTIALS IN ART

fundamental importance for all artistic presentation a few words about their significance may not be out of place.

Concepts of form
The concept of form, which simply is a more restricted concept of space, constitutes the real foundation for our apprehension of the reality of objects. Everything to which we attribute objectivity has a certain extension in space and the more clearly we can define its limits the more real does it appear. In dealing with the outer world we gradually build up, by comparison and arrangement of our observations, typical concepts of different things which, while in themselves abstractions, have for us a symbolic significance forming a foundation for our understanding of these objects whether in nature or in art. The value of the different appearances of objects is measured for us by the clearness and strength with which they express our concepts of form and space. What we simply divine or dimly experience is presented with greater clearness in art. The artistic process of making such abstractions must be more complete, comprehensive, and convincing than that of which we in general are capable.

Concepts of function
Our conceptions of function originate in our habit of associating certain changes in form with the idea of an action, an operation, or a process in nature which was the cause of the change. We understand a number of outer characteristics, movements, and facial expressions as indications of inner states or conditions. Even when altogether new objects present themselves we presuppose in them those particular qualities or emotions which according to our observation usually accompany similar functional

RHYTHM AND FORM

indications. Concepts of function are only indirectly dependent on natural objects, being subjective reactions or impressions of nature's life which are produced when we penetrate the external phenomenon by means of physical or spiritual perception. They assume the character of intermediary abstract ideas which make it possible for the artist to arouse in the spectator definite psychic or physical impressions without holding to direct imitation of nature. If we understand these concepts or ideas of function in their most general significance we need not necessarily, as Hildebrand does, hold them to be dependent on the concepts of form. He claims that an artistically satisfactory rendering of functional values cannot be made without a clear presentation of the object's space- and form-values, but there are certainly important works of art which have in them a highly developed and synthetic expression of function in spite of their relatively weak qualities of form. That is the case, for instance, in an art that aims at decorative simplification, which may be functionally expressive without being bound by respect for the actual form of natural objects.

We all must agree that the real motive of the artist is a pictorial conception—an abstraction deduced from nature—and not the object itself: but ~~this~~ more or less abstract conception is not necessarily arrived at by a conscious elimination or the use of reason and rule; it may be the result of an intuitive or subconscious mode of selecting the essential elements of an object or a scene. The pictorial conception can vary almost indefinitely between the striving for close objective imitation of nature

ESSENTIALS IN ART

and a purely subjective presentation of ideas and emotions. And it should be remembered in this connection that the mental concept does not become a work of art without a conscious purposive use of line and tone, form and colour, a deliberate arrangement by the artist of certain elements of expression according to the requirements of a creative impulse or idea.

When it comes to pictorial representation a certain element of form is of course necessary, but it need not be developed in the three-dimensional sense, it might equally well be conceived as a flat design. ~~X~~It is only the art of objective representation which is bound to the cubic form. Side by side with this has often existed an art concerned less with external objects and phenomena than with inner conditions and emotions. It has usually employed means of expression the artistic significance of which was not primarily dependent on space- and form-values. ~~X~~Certainly this kind of art never had the same importance in the Western World as the classic art based on the representation of organic form, but it has nevertheless at times come to the front and assumed a leading rôle during periods of strong emotional excitement when the interest in the objective world gave way to a more ecstatic attitude towards life. The abstract mode of representation appears in its purest and most highly developed form in the old art of China. This will be more closely examined in a subsequent paragraph; in the meantime, we will content ourselves with emphasizing some of the general principles involved.

RHYTHM AND FORM

II

If one studies what is commonly called form, as presented in painting and sculpture, one must admit that form in itself never constitutes the true criterion of artistic significance. The cultivation of form has of course always been an unavoidable condition for art that depends on material expression, yet the life of a work of art, its soul (if we may employ a much-abused word), although it employs form, must not be regarded as a property inherent in form as such. It seems to us that form should be considered as a merely neutral vehicle the significance of which is dependent on some indwelling purpose or principle. Strictly speaking, in the employment of form the reproduction of objective phenomena is of secondary importance, the primary being the stimulation of impressions of inner reality. It is indeed a common experience that the practice of mere representation (reproduction of nature) kills this delicate element which lends expressional significance to form; this happens when artists are working to develop technical skill or to depict something which they have not seen with their "inner eye," their spiritual or emotional perception.

Form can be defined as the material dependent on the purpose of the artist.

From a philosophical point of view, form simply means limitation in two or three dimensions. It is a material manifestation, composed by lines and planes which in itself carries no expression if not ensouled by some living principle. For instance, a reproduction of a square or a cube in a drawing without any definite intention or individual purpose other

ESSENTIALS IN ART

than to copy the original, will obviously have no particular significance beyond that which pertains to the original.

The life and expressional value of form in pictorial art depends upon the essential limitations of line and colour. Colour may be reduced to mere light and shade and as such is inseparable from form, just as line may be expressed pictorially either as the tracing of a point or as the division between two planes. Without definition there is no form, but the mode of definition need not necessarily be a line, it may be a succession of tones or colours. If for instance we think of a simple cube represented in a certain light which endows it with different values of tone, or drawn with the accentuation of certain lines producing an impression of direction or position or some other quality, then we shall see that the representation has gained a certain expressional value. The more freely the artist employs colour and line, the more the form becomes translated into a living vehicle for definite ideas or intentions. This modification, emphasis, or simplification presupposes a process of abstraction carried on in the consciousness of the craftsman which we call artistic creation.

On the other hand, it seems unavoidable that if a painter concentrates all his attention on reproducing as minutely and tangibly as possible the material form, without any subjective emphasis, his work may be "natural" in a superficial way, but it will lack inner reality or life. It will not be a work of art which has a life independently of the objects reproduced. Naturally, even such a work of art cannot be accomplished without some degree of abstraction,

RHYTHM AND FORM

but the process of abstraction could hardly in this case be called an artistic function: it is rather a concession to traditional types or concepts of form.

The emphasis or expression achieved by the intentional arrangement of lines or colours (light and shade) may of course be of very different kinds, but generally speaking it does indicate a movement, whether an outer purely physical action or an inner emotional process. In the latter case the expression becomes of a more symbolical abstract nature, intended to suggest feelings and ideas; it is indeed more suggestive than descriptive. That is the case for instance in purely decorative or ornamental compositions in which motives from nature have been conventionalized in order to serve as foundation for certain artistic schemes or modes of expression. But in either case, whether physical or emotional, that which we speak of is an artistically controlled movement which may be called *rhythm*.

As a technical term, rhythm is more generally familiar in music. There it is produced by measure and audible tone; it is not visualized, yet it serves the same purpose as in pictorial art. In music rhythm conveys to the listener the individual expression, the spiritual or emotional life which the executant draws from the composition. The more marked the rhythm is in a piece of music the more the composition impresses itself upon our consciousness.

Rhythm is essentially distinct from mere mechanical repetition. It indicates a rising or falling succession of certain units and reveals thereby direction or intention. Rhythm may be even or uneven. In the former case the units follow one

ESSENTIALS IN ART

another at similar intervals, in the latter case the intervals are unequal, and the units are grouped according to some plan peculiar to the particular work, but in both cases the rhythm implies expression or direction in the movement. While controlling in an orderly fashion, it liberates the inherent vitality of a work.

✕ Rhythm, as we have said, may give expression to different kinds of movements, either physical or emotional; the only condition is that the movements shall be subject to a deliberate succession in time or space. We may speak of rhythm in walking or dancing, in activity and repose, and we connect with this an idea of conscious (more or less artistic) control of the movement. ✕ How much more easily a work progresses when performed rhythmically! How much greater the enjoyment becomes when we ourselves take part in the creation of the rhythm, as for instance, in the performance of either music or dancing. Dancing is perhaps the most obvious example of rhythmic expression because it brings to the material plane the rhythm inherent in music. But dancing may also be an independent creative art when it appears as a spontaneous expression of intense religious, erotic, or exalted emotions. The movements then express certain forms of spiritual or emotional life, and the more they are controlled by rhythm the greater artistic significance have they.

rhythm in life ✕ Rhythm seems indeed most closely associated with our conception of organic life; the higher the form of life the more complex is the rhythm. Our very existence depends on rhythmic pulsation which

RHYTHM AND FORM

never fails to register the variations of the movements going on in our physical or emotional organism. Generally we do not consciously control the rhythm of the pulse-beat in this organism, but we are able to tune the instrument so as to make it more or less responsive to impressions of different kinds, thereby increasing or diminishing its rhythmic activity. Our organism can be trained, our will can be strengthened, and the rhythm thereby, to a certain degree, regulated or eventually controlled so far as concerns those sense impressions which do not belong to the domain of the sub-conscious.

✕ The task of the artist is to make rhythm perceptible, for only by this means can he convey to the spectator the impression of life concealed in movement either of interior or exterior kind. If he succeeds in revealing to others a certain rhythm he thereby establishes a connection with the life that pulses in the veins of the spectator, which, as we have said, is in itself controlled by rhythm. He calls forth a response or reaction in the spiritual or physical organism which may be either harmonious or discordant just in so far as that instrument is tuned in accord with the individual rhythm expressed in the work. ✕ This is most obvious when the movement is purely emotional or spiritual; when we come to physical movement we readily perceive it without any tuning of the instrument because we are organically attuned to the rhythmic vibrations of the physical world. The reaction of the spectator to the artist's suggestion is of course even on this plane directed by subjective conditions, but the movement proceeds in accordance with objective laws.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

Rhythmic expression in art is by no means dependent on natural objects ; it is not enhanced in a picture by making the material form appear more tangible. It is to be found rather in the revelation of forces than in the display of forms, and is therefore not greatly affected by any attempts to accomplish the illusion of objective reality.✕

In the study of architecture we may readily see that rhythm is of decisive significance for the artistic result. It may be traced in systems of proportion, in the relation between closed and open spaces, in the strains of constructive members, in the correlation of weights and supports. The artistic value of an architectural composition cannot be independent of structural principles because these are in themselves the rhythmic organization of nature's forces. Rhythm is indeed the ordering principle and must necessarily be employed in constructive art ; it is the guiding principle in creation. Consequently ideal architecture is essentially an art of rhythmic proportion modified by practical considerations. Where imitation of nature is not involved the creation is more likely to be a work of pure rhythm. For this reason it is easier to establish laws of composition in architecture or in music than in sculpture or painting.✕

Classic sculpture was based principally on systems of proportion which had a more or less obviously rhythmic character.✕ These creations are dominated by certain fundamental ideas of harmonious and expressive proportion which are supported by observation of nature but finally rest upon a definite conception of life in which rhythm and number have a decisive influence. The Pythagorean system, for

RHYTHM AND FORM

instance, which underlies the most important æsthetic definitions of antiquity, is built upon theories of rhythmic proportions which can be numerically defined. When Greek sculpture finally passed into unreserved naturalism then the controlling ideal principle of proportion disappeared. Nevertheless even in this later art one may find rhythm, though not of a kind that is the result of law-bound proportions: the rhythm of this naturalistic art is actually that of the pulse-beat of life itself.

The art of painting certainly offers the greatest opportunities for rhythmic presentation. The painter has means at his disposal which are more subtle and flexible than those employed by the sculptor; he can more easily represent abstract motion and suggest fleeting emotional impressions. He is less hindered than the sculptor by the material requirements of his art.

We have already shown that painting relies mainly upon two different means of presenting or suggesting rhythm, namely, tone and line, but when we speak of these two means or methods of expression as separate it is merely for the sake of simplification and convenience, as they are seldom entirely independent of each other. In most cases they are indeed very intimately related, yet either the element of tone or that of line can generally be said to dominate. The terms must consequently be employed in a very broad sense.

The linear method of expression, as we understand it, is not limited to flat design defined by outlines; it applies equally well to any work in which the sense of outline predominates over that of

ESSENTIALS IN ART

tone and consequently it may well be employed to suggest solidity and plastic relief.* The contour is usually emphasized though not necessarily represented by a traced outline, the form and details being sharply defined and not lost in the play of light and shade. When painting approaches sculpture its method of expression becomes predominantly linear, but the same method is also naturally employed by an art approaching flat decorative design. In the one case as in the other the importance of outline is predominant: the object represented is clearly and easily visible, even if the effect of relief is not specially emphasized. Everything is deliberately planned and definitely expressed. This mode of expression is naturally produced by intellectual rather than emotional conceptions.

The opposite mode of expression, which chiefly depends upon tone, does not seek to express tangible reality by means of sharp definition of forms; its contours are lost, it presents objects as optical phenomena appearing in a certain atmosphere, a certain medium of light and shade. The picture does not correspond with the subject in such an objective fashion as in the former case. The painting presents phenomena under the transforming influence of light and colour and thus attains an individual value which is often little dependent upon objective form. Colour, of course, is not a matter of brilliant or varied pigments but is rather an interplay of tone values acting as a dissolving or blending element which

* By line we do not mean a line traced by a point but the effect of lines produced by the interaction of planes or the visible limitation of forms. "Line" in this sense is tantamount to sharp definition of form.

RHYTHM AND FORM

may be suggested in monochrome as well as with the richest palette. The tonal mode of expression (which is purely pictorial) is not dependent on variegated, vivid, or intense colours; on the contrary, artists who have carried this mode of expression to the highest perfection have most nearly approached the use of pure monochrome. The greater their success in the poetical translation of reality and in the revelation of its inner significance the more complete is their emancipation from the bewildering variety of nature's colour shop. The best examples of this are offered by the later works of Rembrandt and Velasquez, which are tuned in the colour-key of golden brown and silver-gray and by all those Chinese and Japanese paintings which though executed merely in India ink display great richness and modulation of tone, an atmosphere that envelops and etherealizes everything. The artistic effect here produced by the simplest means vibrates with life, movement, and rhythm.

The specifically tonal or pictorial method of expression which deals with the lively interplay of light and shade can hardly exist apart from some element of movement. It aims indeed at the dissolution of form rather than at its consolidation. Therefore the "tonal style" offers a real life-vehicle for rhythm, that suggestive element of inner or outer movement which is necessary in order that artistic form shall not appear dead. Even in the objective world the conception of rhythm is often connected with the vibration of light and the play of colour, and when such elements are to be translated into a picture naturally, before all else rhythm must be visualized

ESSENTIALS IN ART

or made perceptible to the æsthetic senses by means of tone or line. Light seen through a certain tone of colour and presented by artistic means appears as atmosphere, and atmosphere usually serves as a medium for the translation of the artistic mood. This becomes obvious when atmosphere is condensed to what Leonardo calls *chiaroscuro*,* that subdued illumination which stands "halfway between light and shade" and which better than full daylight suggests inner values. When objects are presented in a veiled effect of *chiaroscuro* it is no longer the material form or their objective appearance which is the essential, but bodiless beauty, the mystery of the soul vibrating like music in pictorial rhythm.

Such values, however, may also be suggested by means of the linear method. Line may also be made an instrument for emotion and imagination, nay, it seems almost as if art under the influence of strong emotion preferred to employ the linear method, as in the Gothic. But it should be observed that the method then did not work with strong sculptural form but in a comparatively flat mode of design. The play of line on a neutral ground became the vehicle of artistic expression, and rhythm the sovereign means by which line achieved emotional significance. In the primitive art of different nations where the spiritual or emotional impulses are not weakened by long pursuit of the reproduction of objective phenomena, rhythmic line usually attains its greatest importance. Thus rhythmic line is here

* *Chiaroscuro* strictly means light and shade, but the term has been used to express certain effects of light and shade, or a modification of *chiaroscuro*.

RHYTHM AND FORM

in the highest degree functional, and constitutes, as it were, the living nerve in the artist's creative imagination.

III

In the preceding paragraphs we have shortly discussed the relation of artistic representation to nature, and the basic elements of form and rhythm as pertaining to the artist's process of abstraction and creation. The general trend of thought which we have sketched may stand out more clearly by the light of some examples representing different schools of painting. It may be well to examine a little closer how objective nature is transformed in art and how far the life of nature determines and conditions the life and expression of a work of art.

To begin with portraiture, we may first consider a photograph of the popular kind, taken in a relatively even light, reproducing well the features of the sitter, but not particularly artistic in arrangement or composition. The picture offers perhaps a faithful record of the forms and details of the features or of the costume, within the mechanical limitations of the camera, but it has no individual life of its own. If it has any individual expressional value this will be due to the model rather than to the reproduction. In most cases the photograph might almost as well be a reproduction of an absolutely faithful cast taken from nature as of the model itself. Briefly, it is a crystallized instantaneous visual impression which has not been made more clear and emphatic by any

ESSENTIALS IN ART

artistic treatment of form and space and in which no intentional accentuation of either line or light has endowed the representation with individuality or revealed in it any rhythmic motion. Certainly there are many portraits painted in a similar manner, in which the direct and unqualified reproduction of the visual impression constitutes the chief aim of the painter; and yet what is reproduced in such a painting is after all not the natural object itself but only a popular conception of the same.

If we think of the same model or a similar one painted by one of the early Italian artists who mainly employed the linear method of expression, say, for instance, Pollajuolo or Botticelli, then we find that a living work of art has taken the place of a dead reproduction. In this case it will be no mere reflection or cast, but an organic creation. The form is clear and unified; the image has an altogether new spatial significance. The artist has worked out leading lines; he has accentuated the defining contour, he has indicated mouth, eyes, and nose, by lines which do not follow at all the small irregularities of nature, but which suggest in a synthetic way the essential character of the features. The planes between the lines are also much simplified; accidental inequalities of the surface are reduced so that the form asserts itself as a unity. X It is a work in which each line and form has its place as an organic member in a pictorial conception, which convinces the spectator by its unity and which charms him by its rhythmic expression of line. The line is in the highest degree functional; it reveals in an artistic synthesis the physical and emotional characteristics

Artistic
Portraits
Contrasted
with
Photographs

RHYTHM AND FORM

of the model, the elements of inner and outer life which were the inspiration of the painter. X Similar peculiarities may be observed in many later portraits in which forms are synthesized and leading lines used pre-eminently for the expression of rhythm. This accentuation of line does not in any way diminish the plastic value of form, as for instance in Leonardo's portraits.

It may be interesting to observe how a master of colour and light solves a similar problem. In his case it is not a question of forms defined by synthetic simplification of line and planes. The figure is enveloped in an atmosphere of subdued luminosity in which the contours are dissolved but in which the full bodily form is plainly perceived. The features are not defined by sharp lines but are modelled in varying tones that vibrate with subdued light. All the planes are broken up; the individual brush-marks are evident; and yet to the eye of the spectator they all blend to produce perfect unity. The artist has emphasized those parts which are of the greatest importance for creating the impression of a powerful and unified form. His conception of space has something of the power and beauty of the infinite. The picture is thus an evidence of the fact that clear and powerful conceptions of space are by no means dependent on the linear (or sculptural) method of expression. X It is, however, in such a work, less a question of definition, of form, than of movement. This movement is reflected not only in the play of light and shade, but also in the actual mode of handling the paint. Here there is rhythm which almost suggests the pulse of life, or more correctly,

picture
by master
of colour
& light

ESSENTIALS IN ART

the pulse-beat of a higher and greater life than that of objective nature.

The deep-seated differences existing between natural objects and our conceptions of them, and, on the other hand, between these two factors and the rhythmically controlled artistic representation, can be most easily understood if we consider figures in motion and their presentation in art. For instance, if we observe a running hound or a galloping horse in nature we generally cannot distinguish the legs so clearly or distinctly as the body or head. These extremities seem more like fleeting shadows or streaks than like anything corresponding with our ideas of the legs of hounds or horses. This is further illustrated by photographs taken with a longer exposure than that which would have been appropriate. Our sight normally gives us a blending of many movements that go to make up a part of a continuous motion which we are unable to analyse with eyes open, though we may do it to some extent by blinking rapidly, in imitation of the photographic camera, which with its rapid shutter can give us a picture of one part of a complex movement. The actual visual impression may therefore be confused and blurred by reason of this inability to analyse a rapid movement or by the limitation of objective conditions. Such a visual impression of course cannot be directly transferred to the canvas: it does not correspond to our idea of how the thing ought to look and still less to those concepts of space and function which the artist must evoke if he would endow his work with power and unity. How very unsatisfying these instantaneous pictures from nature

RHYTHM AND FORM

are, may be seen from photographs which represent animals in such sudden or strange movements that we have no images in our consciousness to correspond with them; they appear to us entirely unconvincing. We know of course that these rapid motions are directly drawn from nature, but they do not evoke in us that feeling of actual movement which the artistically synthesized image of the same would arouse. X The photograph represents simply one or more of an infinite number of positions assumed by an object in motion; it lacks those qualities by which functional values are symbolized and which are necessary for the awakening of physical or emotional reactions in the spectator, and furthermore a photograph usually presents the objects without purposive spatial arrangement or unifying composition. X Thus the photograph has no independent life of its own no matter how intense may have been the life and movement of the object itself. The photograph can only satisfy us and acquire a relatively artistic value in proportion as it is composed with reference to our mode of perception and conventional ideas of form and function.

A photograph consequently is not always what is popularly called "true to nature." A picture of horses or hounds in rapid motion which the public would call "true to nature" must before all else be explicit, and that can only be accomplished by presenting the movement in accordance with popular conceptions. The ideas of form and function peculiar to an ordinary mind must be clearly expressed. This we find exemplified in a large group of so-called realistic paintings in which the artist aimed at

ESSENTIALS IN ART

nothing more than an appearance of probability. His picture is not simply a faithful reproduction of nature, nor is it a work of art built up on strong and selected qualities of form and function ; it is rather an illustration of the popular conception of form and movement. The painter who produces such pictures may have a wonderful command of all technical means, yet he is not a great master if his visual perception, which is not simply an action of the eyes but of soul and mind, does not carry him beyond that which is perceived by any ordinary observer.

abstraction
In a really great work of art the process of abstraction is carried further ; indeed, the greater the work the less subservient it is to the actual forms of natural objects. Here it is no longer a question of visual impressions conceived according to popular ideas, but of a rhythmically accentuated synthesis of those elements of space and function which are inherent in the motive.* The whole is moulded to a unity in which every form and line is an organic member in the pictorial conception from which all accidental or disturbing elements are excluded. The life and expressional value of such a picture is not bound up in its likeness to nature, but depends upon the rhythmic interplay of line and form.

If, for instance, we examine Paolo Uccello's battle scenes with galloping horsemen, we find that the likeness to nature is not very marked. The figures as well as the landscape are treated with a remarkable simplification of all details, but the elimination is achieved with an unfailing eye for unity and clearness of design. Nothing appears to be falling out of the picture or to break through that uniting frontal

RHYTHM AND FORM

plane which comprises the artist's field of vision. The fundamental features of the space-arrangement are indicated by long leading lines produced partly by the lances which indicate the successive planes of distance and partly by the design of the ground which is calculated to strengthen the effect of perspective construction. X The whole composition appears indeed somewhat artificial, but this does not detract from its artistic significance, which must be sought chiefly in the compelling force and synthetic clearness with which the qualities of form and space are expressed as well as in the ponderous and powerful rhythm that dominates the whole picture. The artist was certainly limited as to his means of expression (one can feel that he is still struggling with form), but he has seen the essential; his pictorial conception is monumental; he understands how to bring out the decisive elements of form and rhythm by means of what we have called the linear method, which relies upon significant line and sculptural form. X

Form & Rhythm in Paolo Veronese

A further development of rhythmic expression is to be seen in Leonardo's drawings of fighting and galloping horsemen. The painting which he executed of this subject no longer exists, but we may take it for granted that it did not surpass the drawings with regard to rhythmic life. Drawings and sketches are generally better vehicles for the expression of rhythm, for they are not weighed down by any efforts at the elaboration of detail, but simply fix the visual impression or the essential characteristics of a fleeting concept. Leonardo has made drawings of galloping horsemen that actually vibrate with life.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

Horses and riders are dashed off with long flowing lines that synthesize the form and gather up the whole energy of the movement. An elemental power seems to carry these horses forward irresistibly, as the hurricane drives the foaming waves. The form is only suggested by contour and a few shading strokes; the weight of matter is annihilated by the rhythmic expression of function which is concentrated in a few synthetic lines. In the battle scenes where the riders are hurtling together with irresistible violence, the whirl of movement becomes cyclonic; the lines are interwoven so that the eye can hardly distinguish them, but we feel the seething rhythm of life.

There is hardly any Western artist who, with the use of line, has better succeeded in expressing intense movement or has more directly fixed on paper the pulse-beat of life. ✕ Leonardo's drawings cannot be considered as studies from nature in the ordinary sense, because the study was completed in his mind before he touched the paper. The drawings are flashes from the creative imagination of the artist, fleeting pictorial impressions caught in a few expressive strokes of the pen or red chalk. Only thus was it possible to achieve such a supremely synthetic rhythm. ✕

Other artists, as for instance Rubens and Goya, have represented similar violent movement with pre-eminently colouristic or tonal methods of expression; tone and colour play a much more important part in their works than in those of Leonardo. The hunting scenes of Rubens and the bull-fights of Goya pulsate with a rhythm not less intense than that which

rhythmic abstraction
of Leonardo

RHYTHM AND FORM

ensouls the drawings of Leonardo ; these painters do not synthesize the forms by means of continuous lines, but translate them into terms of colour or values of light and shade. Superficially the appearance may be more naturalistic, yet their artistic foundation is an abstraction.

Examples could be easily multiplied. There is no lack of pictures representing horses in movement ; this subject has always excited the creative imagination of the artist, because it affords an opportunity to bring out the full potentiality of functional values. The means of expression may vary from the purely linear to the purely tonal, yet the dominating importance of rhythm remains essentially the same.

Our previous remarks suffice to show that the life of a work of art does not depend upon the life or peculiarities of the pictured object, and that it is in no way produced by an effort to represent faithfully and completely objective conditions. It is achieved only through mental conceptions of form, function, and similar ideas, and it rests upon an abstraction which must be visualized and translated in terms of rhythmic line or tone.

For instance, when a living and a dead object are presented in a picture, it may happen that the latter has more artistic life than the former. The one is perhaps merely a reproduction of the objective phenomenon, reliable as a descriptive illustration, but without life of its own ; the other, in spite of its representing a dead object, may be a living creation of rhythmic line or tone.

Paulus Potter painted a famous picture, representing a young bull beside a recumbent cow, with a

ESSENTIALS IN ART

couple of sheep and a herdsman, all as large as life. The picture is much admired on the ground of its likeness to nature and is regarded as one of the principal attractions of the Mauritshuis at The Hague. The young bull appears in all his burly vigour, every detail is correct, he looks almost like a coloured cast, solid but not alive. He stands like a block on four legs, artistically meaningless in spite of all the evident merits of the picture as a descriptive imitation of nature.

Rembrandt has also painted cattle, for instance, dead oxen which hang displayed in a slaughter-house. But these dead oxen have artistic life. They gleam with reflected colours that gather up the subdued light of the gloomy cellar. The pictures are replete with glowing *chiaroscuro*, light and shadows are woven into a veil that envelops the forms, the dark corners are filled with unseen life; there is a suggestion of something more than the objects that can be distinguished in the faint light. Here we are not interested in the material aspect of things, not in their outward appearance, but in that which aroused the vision of the master and induced him to transform the material phenomena into a harmony of light and tone. The form is not thereby weakened, it is vitalized by being translated into tone and colour. Everything that is touched by a master like Rembrandt undergoes such a translation. He never lays his hand to pen or brush without following and revealing the pulse of life which throbs in all things, everywhere, but which yet is only dimly and seldom perceived by us because our eyes have been fixed too long upon the mere material form.

RHYTHM AND FORM

IV

✕ All attempts to define this which we have called rhythm must be unsatisfactory; it is something which almost eludes intellectual analysis. The pulse of life must be felt to be understood, yet we may observe its varied expressions in art and describe them with reference to their mode of operation. ✕ If we would understand the importance of rhythm we could hardly choose better material for study than the works of the old Chinese masters. Their life does not depend upon their illusive likeness to nature, nor on any attempt to reproduce the form and function of material organisms; their life-principle is that rhythm of feeling or movement which the artist suggests by his use of line and tone. The artistic process of abstraction has been carried much further and employed more freely in China than in Europe; there the principal object of interest was never form as such, but rather the idea of form, the inner reality.

An indication of the fundamental importance of rhythm to the Chinese painters is to be found in those general principles of artistic creation which were formulated at the beginning of the sixth century by Hsieh Ho. They form a part of the first theoretical discourse on Chinese painting that has been preserved—the Ku Hua Pin lu—and they have continually been quoted by later Chinese writers as the most authoritative basis for art-criticism and served as the classic point of departure for the study of the aims and methods of

ESSENTIALS IN ART

the old Chinese masters. These principles should not, however, be taken too literally, they do not make up a set of rules comparable to the "canons" of Polycletus or Lysippus, but should rather be regarded as indications of the general direction and spirit of Chinese art during its classic periods and as a theoretical standard for criticism.

A great difficulty for the right understanding and explanation of these rules arises from the fact that Western languages do not seem to contain expressions equivalent to some of the Chinese words, consequently the translations offered by different European writers show considerable differences not only in form but also in meaning. Particularly the first and most important principle, which refers to the spiritual expression and vital significance of art, has been interpreted in various ways by different authors; it is vague enough to allow a broad margin for æsthetic speculation. Our translation of Hsieh Ho's six principles, which partly differs from those hitherto published in English, is based on communications by Professor Taki of the Tokyo University, who recently has occupied himself with a special study of the *Ku Hua Pin lu*, the results of which he is publishing in Japanese. Hsieh Ho writes:

"In my opinion, in the case of paintings, criticism is a discussion of the relative merits of various pictures. There is no picture which is not intended for some moral purpose and which does not mark the state of civilization. The achievements of the past thousand years would have been unknowable but for the existence of old paintings. Although the 'six principles' of painting existed, there were very few painters who properly followed all these rules in their works, yet some painters

RHYTHM AND FORM

skilfully applied one or two of the 'six principles' which are here enumerated as follows:—

- "1. Spiritual rhythm and movement of life.
- "2. Use of the brush in structural drawing.
- "3. Representation of form in accordance with nature.
- "4. Colouring appropriate to the objects.
- "5. Composition and postures.
- "6. Copying and imitating (classic models)."

From the point of view of æsthetics the two first principles are by far the most interesting; they express the essential requirements which must be fulfilled if anything like artistic significance shall be obtained. They are the core and backbone of Chinese painting, and, in a wider sense, the basis of all truly vital and significant art. The other principles have mainly an historical interest; their requirements have never been insisted upon by Chinese critics as strongly as the demands for spiritual rhythm and structural drawing by means of the brush. Representation of form in accordance with nature, appropriate colouring and composition are of course all of some importance, but they do not touch the inner reality or soul of an artistic creation as directly as rhythmic vitality and the handling of the brush. The last rule concerning the imitation and actual reproduction of famous models is of course most important for the right understanding and interpretation of old Chinese painting, but it reveals rather a weakness than a strong point in Chinese æsthetics. The later Chinese painters had indeed a tiresome way of saying over and over again that which the great masters had once said in a living original manner. It must be admitted, at least from a Western point

ESSENTIALS IN ART

of view, that repetition and scholastic conventions constituted "the heel of Achilles" in Chinese painting.

Whatever importance we attach to Hsieh Ho's principles they should not be taken as a complete artistic programme of pedantic formulæ that had to be followed to the letter. As a matter of fact, these principles did not mean more to the great Chinese painters than, for instance, the rules of prosody to real poets. They may in part have been useful in order to facilitate sureness and swiftness of execution, but their main importance remained with the critics who were mostly far removed from the imaginative life of the painters.

Especially the first of these principles—"ch'i yun shen tung"—was considered a *sine qua non* by all later critics, but unfortunately Hsieh Ho stated it without any further explanation as to what he meant by "spiritual rhythm or resonance," and consequently it has been subject to widely different interpretations by Chinese as well as by foreign writers. According to Professor Taki "ch'i yun" conveys the idea of the "resonance of spirit" (which may be interpreted as the spiritual rhythm in the inner life of all things). The same authority says that these words recall the "I-ching" (Book of Changes), the philosophy of which was much in vogue at the time of Hsieh Ho. Similar ideas, probably suggested by the same philosophical source, are to be found in a contemporary "Discourse on Poets" by Chung Yun. Furthermore it should be observed that "ch'i yun" is not connected with the following words, "shen tung"

RHYTHM AND FORM

(life-movement), as a subject with a predicate, but that the two expressions stand as two independent ideas. The Japanese historian also raises the question whether "ch'i yun" should be regarded as something inherent in the objects painted or as a purely subjective quality dependent on the artist, and he comes to the conclusion that "resonance of spirit," according to Hsieh Ho, was an objective element, something immanent in the painted objects.

No doubt this must be so, although it is in apparent contradiction with the interpretation of some early Chinese critics, because the ~~the~~ "spiritual rhythm" or "resonance of spirit" must after all be something universal, the breadth of the world-soul through all visible forms, an inner reality, an undying spark. ~~X~~ But such a reality cannot be caught and visualized except by the real artist, and it seems therefore futile to try to make it a mainly subjective or objective element. Strictly speaking, it is neither the one nor the other, but a result of the relation between the artist and his motive, and it is only through the creative faculty of the artist that it is brought out and made an essential criterion in art.

The general remarks that we have offered in some previous paragraphs as to the importance of rhythm may serve to prove how this quality can be found in the most divergent schools and modes of artistic creation—its universal importance—and although we used the word in a less definite sense than Hsieh Ho's first principle seems to imply, it is hardly in opposition to his "spiritual rhythm." Yet, it should be borne in mind that ~~there is an~~ |

ESSENTIALS IN ART

essential difference in the meaning of this term in Eastern and in Western art: to the Chinese rhythm was the evidence of spirit in matter, reality in illusion, it was the inherent life-principle in all things; to the Christian it was a spiritual quality that might be used to adorn matter or endow it with a borrowed beauty and temporary significance as a symbol of another world somewhere else in time and space. The material world had quite another reality to the Westerner than to the Chinese. X

Later Chinese writers who have discussed Hsieh Ho's principles do not throw much light on the subject; they simply point out that "spiritual rhythm and movement of life" are present in certain pictures and absent in others, and accordingly praise or depreciate the paintings. But they give hardly any further explanation of the philosophical meaning of this principle. Thus writes, for instance, Cheng Yen-yuan, the well-known critic about the middle of the ninth century, in his "Records of Painting in Various Ages" (Li Tai Ming Hua-chi):

"Some old painters were able to represent spiritual expression by means of structural drawing without adhering strictly to the outer aspects of objects. The aim of painting lies, indeed, outside of the mere representation of form. But this is difficult to make intelligible to common people. On the other hand, modern paintings may be perfect in imitation of external forms, but most of them are lacking in spiritual rhythm or resonance. If you make spiritual rhythm the object of your endeavour in painting, then the external likeness follows naturally."

Further on, in discussing Hsieh Ho's principles, he reiterates this idea more than once and makes the following statement about contemporary art (which

RHYTHM AND FORM

indeed sounds surprising to those who are wont to praise Tang art):

" Pictures painted by modern artists may be fairly good in representation of form, but they lack spiritual rhythm. If they are good in colour, they are lacking in the right handling of the brush. How can such productions be called real painting? Alas! the men of to-day, their art does not reach far! " *

It is hardly worth while to go on quoting further instances of the use and application of Hsieh Ho's first principle in Chinese art criticism, because it can never be understood as an isolated statement. If we want to understand its full import we have to enter into a study of the whole philosophy of life which inspired the Chinese artists and their attitude towards the world of phenomena. It is not simply an intellectual definition, but rather an æsthetic indication of their innate feeling for the spiritual significance of material forms.

Hsieh Ho's second principle, which refers to the right use of the brush (in the drawing of forms), may seem more limited in scope than the first one, but it is hardly less essential as a criterion of æsthetic significance in Chinese painting. It forms, so to speak, the vehicle and completion of the first statement. The brush stroke is, indeed, the most direct and sensitive instrument of Eastern painters. It is through this instrument that the pulse-beat of the universal soul (which we in a general way have named rhythm) must be conveyed in individual form. It has been said by a prominent Japanese critic that " a picture without vigorous brush

* I have to thank Mr. Arthur Waley of the British Museum for improving the translations of Chinese records of art made for me in Japan.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

strokes is like a body without a soul"—a comparison which may not quite hit the point, but certainly brings home the enormous importance attached by Eastern critics to the actual handling of the brush.

Chinese art: brush strokes

The aim of the greatest artists of the East was always to represent objects with as few and continuous strokes of the brush as possible, each one replete with creative vitality. X Particularly during the Sung dynasty, when Chinese painting reached its highest degree of refinement and æsthetic expressiveness, the significance of the single brush stroke became the leading principle in pictorial art. Then was developed what has been called "the method of reducing brush strokes," the most radical means of abstract expressiveness and pictorial representation freed from material imitation. X It was the result of the same spiritual inspiration that found expression in the Dhyana—or Zen—philosophy which also aimed at a direct intuitional perception of life and nature, discarding all kinds of intellectual speculations and dogmatic definitions as mere hindrances in the conception of reality. If painting was to satisfy such an attitude towards nature it had to use only the simplest and most essential means of expression, those which could convey an impression of the spiritual unity in the complexity of material forms.

The method of reducing brush strokes could hardly have been developed in any other material than India ink; this medium led by its own nature to the most swift and concentrated manner of workmanship. When the artist goes to work in India ink painting, he must have full knowledge

RHYTHM AND FORM

of the power of his medium and absolute certainty of touch, as each stroke is decisive. It excludes all elaboration and successive alterations, such as may be employed in oil painting. Painting became thus to the Chinese artist in far higher degree than to his European colleague a pictorial writing of poems, a transferring to paper of the abstract conceptions of the creative imagination. It became more fully than any modern form of art expressionism—not as a result of merely intellectual theories but as a direct expression for a profound philosophy of life.

It is not known for certain whether pure India ink painting was practised at the time when Hsieh Ho formulated his principles, but his statement clearly indicates that painting in China from olden times was mainly dependent on line as means of expression. As a matter of fact, colour never meant the same to the Chinese artists as to the Westerners; it was not used for modelling but rather for flat washes, the pictorial effects were attained by various tone values of ink more than by various pigments. Only in certain religious paintings used for the purpose of decoration, or as symbolic illustrations and signs, colour played a more important rôle. Finally, during the last culminating period of pictorial creation in China, colour was, as stated above, practically discarded, which however by no means impaired the purely colouristic beauty of Chinese art. Hsieh Ho's pronouncement seems almost to anticipate such an evolution, which, indeed, was in full conformity with the inherent characteristics of Chinese painting.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

The paramount importance of brush stroke in Eastern art can hardly be fully realized without taking into consideration the close connection between painting and calligraphy in China and Japan. These two modes of expressing emotions and ideas constituted to the Chinese simply two branches of the same tree: writing as well as painting was to them originally a symbolic and pictorial mode of expression, and the value and beauty of the symbol depended in both cases on the handling of the ink and the brush. The ideograph was not simply a means of intellectual communication, its full import cannot be conveyed by transcribing it into Western words, it has a meaning and significance beyond that of ordinary letters. To quote from an article by Professor Taki (in the "Kokka," 1916):

"A character may have been written exactly in the same form and style, yet the manner of using the brush makes a world of difference in the result, which may become insipidly lifeless or instinct with power or feeling. However subjective calligraphy may be, it in many instances exhibits features that find coincidences in natural forces. . . . Some critics discuss calligraphy in reference to natural forces. They recommend the taking of lessons from nature in the use of the brush. They declare that strokes should convey such impressions as we would receive from towering mountains, rushing currents, rampant dragons, raging tigers, wind-tossed trees, rising clouds, dripping dew, etc. In truth, the more of such symbolic expressions a writing bears, the richer it becomes in beauty and grace. A chaotic medley of fantastic flourishes does not, however, conduce to ideal beauty: at the bottom there must be the individual mind to unify all the symbolic signs written."

Writing was thus to some extent just as much as painting an imaginative symbol for the spiritual significance of things and thoughts, though, of course, more than its sister art bound and limited

RHYTHM AND FORM

by a practical purpose. It had to comply with the requirements of intellectual definition and could not develop as freely as painting along lines of purely æsthetic expressiveness. But the best writing was always distinguished by a highly pictorial character and was praised by native critics for its symbolic significance. "Those who have knowledge of calligraphy generally have a knowledge of painting as well," writes the Tang critic Chang Yen yuan, and in another chapter of his "Records of Painting in Various Ages" he says:

"In delineating objects it is of importance to represent them in accordance with nature. They should not, however, be imitated only in externals, but should be rendered in a way expressive of spiritual rhythm which comes from the manner of using the brush according to the will of each individual author. It is for this reason that one skilled in painting is usually also accomplished in calligraphy."

Other Chinese critics discuss painting and calligraphy from the same point of view, in fact they all insist upon the close connection between these two forms of pictorial symbolism. One of the latest of these Chinese writers, Ch'en Chieh-chou of the Chin dynasty, makes the following interesting statement:

"All objects in the universe should be viewed (by the painter) only from the points of form and colour. Hence in pictorial representation of an object its form should first be outlined with the brush and then filled in with ink in appropriate shades. Colouring in a true pictorial sense does not mean a mere application of variegated pigments. The natural aspect of an object can be beautifully conveyed by India ink if one knows how to produce the required shades. . . . In ink sketches the brush and the ink stand in the relation of a general and a lieutenant, but in coloured painting colours and the brush are like master and servant. In other words, ink complements, but colours supplement the work of the brush."

ESSENTIALS IN ART

The importance of the brush strokes in Chinese painting could hardly be too strongly insisted upon. They formed, so to speak, the strings upon the painter's instrument; by them the music and the rhythm were produced. But only as long as the inspiration remained fresh and the hand followed spontaneously the emotional or spiritual impulse. Later on, when the inspiring glow was fainting and the creative power was lost in archæological repetition, this mode of painting became an excuse for using the brush in drawing empty formulæ. The methods of expression were systematized with reference to different subjects and motives, and rules which originally had been formulated as means to facilitate the sureness and swiftness of execution became academic doctrines that quelled the individual initiative.

In China, as elsewhere, the great artists worked only when they found themselves in the most harmonious surroundings and nothing hampered the flow of the creative power. There are a number of stories about Chinese painters who were unwilling to paint except under the influence of a mood so intense as to render them indifferent to outer conditions. Some of them retired to absolutely secluded and silent workrooms where they burned incense rapt in meditative ecstasy, like Kuo Hsi, who wrote (according to Fenollosa):

"Unless I dwell in a quiet house, seat myself in a retired room with the windows open, the table dusted, incense burning, and ten thousand trivial thoughts crushed out and sunk, I cannot have good feeling for painting, or beautiful taste, and cannot create the *Yü* (the mysterious and wonderful)."

RHYTHM AND FORM

Chang Yen yuan tells about another old painter, Ku Chün-chih, who had a two-storied house built for him which he used as his studio. Whenever he went upstairs to practise painting, he took away the ladder so that no one of his family could come up and disturb him.

Others lived in remote tracts, in the woods or mountains, sitting from morning till evening out in the open sunk in the contemplation of nature's mystery until the inspiration began to flow. Others again intoxicated themselves by drink in order to reach the condition of ecstasy necessary for the liberation of the creative energy. It is told of the Tang painter Ku Sheng that he began by spreading his silk on the ground and mixing his colours. Meanwhile he had men blow horns, beat drums, and produce a terrible noise. While this was going on Ku put on an embroidered robe and turban and drank himself half tipsy. Then he began to sketch the contours of his painting and to lay on his colours with a broad brush. . . . Peaks of mountains, islands and other forms appeared in a wonderful way. (Cf. Giles, Introduction, p. 77.)

It was the fleeting vision, the indescribable, the infinite that was to be seized and rendered in a few living strokes. The artist could not stand apart describing and fashioning an appearance of something that could be held and bound by material means. His own personality should dissolve and melt like a tone in the great harmony of nature; his work should unveil the immeasurable depths of universal life.

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ESSENTIALS IN ART

The Chinese painters, while imbued with a full appreciation of the importance of harmonious arrangement and balance (which is expressed in the fifth principle of Hsieh Ho), usually avoid the rigid symmetry which requires repetition of corresponding forms and movements. Such a limited conception of symmetry was foreign to their nature, it conflicted with the very life-principle of Chinese art. Even in the obviously centralized compositions of a hieratic order, where the motive depends upon the emphasis of a certain figure or central idea, the principle of variation comes into play, and while the corresponding parts may be harmoniously balanced there is no actual repetition. This relative avoidance of strictly symmetrical arrangement becomes more apparent to us if we recall the rigid symmetry that prevailed in the religious paintings of the early Western artists which were composed in a more definitely architectonic sense and which relied upon absolute equipoise for their decorative effect. This is exemplified by so many well-known altarpieces executed in Italy and elsewhere during the classic epochs that we hardly need to quote single pictures.

Many of the early Chinese pictures known to us show that the artists had a complete mastery of reproduction or representation of material objects as well as a certain knowledge of perspective, but neither of these scientific accomplishments was allowed to interfere with the purely æsthetic purpose of the work, which, indeed, also has been clearly expressed by all the critics who discussed Hsieh Ho's principles.

RHYTHM AND FORM

It is evident that the feeling for symmetry and centralized composition is closely associated with the demand for accentuation of form and for the indication of space. They are interdependent modes of conception directly or indirectly derived from our practical acquaintance with the human figure, its organism and proportions, the standard to which we unconsciously refer all our ideas of proportion, size and shape. This consideration brings us to one of the most marked differences between the painting of the East and of the West. X

In European art the human figure has been considered the highest symbol of expression. Perfect bodily beauty, whether as a symbol or for its own sake, was the ideal sought throughout the classic periods. According to the Western conception beauty as well as deity seem to demand expression in anthropomorphic form in order to satisfy emotion and intellect. No account is taken of the infinite which makes man appear but as a vanishing factor in the great organism of nature. This anthropomorphic tendency has played so important a part in Western culture that it could be taken as the foundation for a complete philosophy of art; it indicates at the same time the limitation and the greatness of Western art. X We shall have occasion to return to this question in speaking of Chinese landscape painting; here a few words only may be added as to its significance for pictorial composition in general.

We have a natural inclination to make our own body the standard for artistic creation as well as to some extent for ideal concepts, though this

ESSENTIALS IN ART

habit through long use has become almost unconscious. Our own corporeal form constitutes a prime factor for the understanding of the appearance of exterior objects in nature and art. Impressions that wholly or partly are communicated by our sense of touch as well as those communicated by sight are naturally dependent upon our familiarity with our own body. Its symmetrical and clearly centralized character inclines us to look for something similar in a work of art, a symmetry or a balance which depends upon the equipoise of the parts. When we do not find it we experience a sense of dissatisfaction; the work appears incomplete or fragmentary, a caprice, or a suggestion of something lying beyond the limits of that which is actually represented. The Western mind is so permeated with the conviction of the superiority of the human figure over all other forms and organisms that it is impossible to avoid referring to it as an ultimate standard for an estimate of the creations of art. X

In old Chinese art conditions are quite different. There the human figure does not hold such a privileged position and consequently it has not anything like the same importance as a standard of appreciation. XThe beauty of the body or the perfect nude was never an ideal for Chinese painters; on the contrary, they avoided it. As already stated, they did not seek to represent the material form for its own sake, but the spiritual or emotional values that lie behind. The Chinese artist, to a certain degree, freed himself from the tyranny of bodily limitations and centred his consciousness in spiritual nature,

RHYTHM AND FORM

and he was thus free to express abstract conceptions in a less conventional form. He withdrew himself from his lower consciousness from subservience to the forms of nature through a process of abstraction which indeed to some extent is operative in all artistic creation, but which is carried much further in Chinese art than in that of the Western nations.



II

ART AND RELIGION

ART AND RELIGION

THERE are indeed great difficulties in reaching conclusions in the study of æsthetics. If one simply holds to formal analysis one never reaches an explanation of the origin and significance of various methods of artistic creation. One is simply led into those endless descriptions, assertions, and recapitulations, in which books on æsthetics abound. ✕ The underlying sources of a certain trend in art, a certain manner of vision and mode of presenting pictorially ideas or the symbolism of nature cannot be reached without a closer study of the religious life and philosophy of the time and of the individuals by whom such art was produced. The religious life and experience of a people are obviously products of the spiritual will, which is also, though perhaps less obviously, the origin of all true art. Philosophically, art and religion may be called branches of the same tree; they both draw nourishment rather from the inner emotional or spiritual world than from the outer world of material existence. ✕

Art & Religion

If one conceives art in a merely mechanical fashion, if one tries to explain it as imitation of nature or as a product of technical skill and the material employed, or as ornamentation, a mere play of forms and colours, one will only be describing various elements in the genesis of artistic creation; ✕

* This seems to leave only account for all important spiritual & religious which plays as great a part in ornament as in the form of art.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

but its actual origin will be overlooked. One will be saying nothing about the spiritual mystery which gives to art its power of fascination; one will be throwing no light on the peculiar fact that artists represent infinitely more than what lies within the bounds of visual experience and conscious ideation; one will be giving no hint of the difference between purposive design and the scribbling of a child or an idiot. So long as even æsthetically inclined people continue to hold on to a more or less materialistic explanation of art, it can hardly be wondered at that the general public continues to judge a work of art by the test of its faithfulness in reproducing some familiar aspects of nature.

We have already in a previous chapter touched upon the relation of art to nature; the difficulty of reaching a wider understanding of these questions largely comes from our habit of using our eyes and our understanding exclusively for the collection of material facts. (This is especially true of art historians.) We have learnt to face nature catalogue in hand, and to put no trust in imagination and intuition. We have speculated to some extent on what we have seen, but we have hardly ventured to draw the natural conclusion that the highest expressions of man's soul-life, one of which is art, must have their origin in a spiritual will. If this were not the case, how was it possible, for instance, that the art of the classic periods, which availed itself of organic forms, could represent these so much more beautifully and expressively than they appeared in nature or that the more abstract art could create designs whose emotional and spiritual significance

*Here we have a comparison between the
function, which is largely common with religion
& art, both of them being a means of expression.*

ART AND RELIGION

is still unsurpassed? That which there found expression whether in picture, ornament, or architecture, is not simply a desire for ornamentation or representation, but a creative will revealing an inner reality in man and in nature. The same is true of primitive art; the subjective significance is not here obscured by methods of expression, which are relatively undeveloped. This happens more easily when the method of execution becomes more naturalistic, because then artists often lose sight of the inner reality in their pursuit of technical skill.

It has been said, not without exaggeration but with some truth, that for the great artist as for the religious devotee, the physical universe exists only as a means to ecstasy (cf. Clive Bell, "Art," p. 81); but the ecstasy may indeed be of many different kinds, from the purely contemplative state of the philosopher who merges his consciousness in the infinite, down to that of mere sensual intoxication. Art may be used as a path to the sublime or as a means to the intensification of sensuous enjoyment; and the pure bliss of the devotee may find its parallel in the fanatic's fierce joy of persecution. Neither art nor religion finds the key to the universe in practical utility, but rather regards the objective world as a symbolic expression of some inner reality which stirs the soul to aspiration and creation. This point of view is a necessary condition for the production of anything worthy of the name of artistic creation, or of a truly religious life. It first becomes possible to draw the parallel between religion and art when one understands them both in their purest form freed from the trammels of

*They then & indeed both as far as these lie at the root
of all aesthetic beauty & life & are one among the
chief attributes of the Universe; but though they*

ESSENTIALS IN ART

intellectual conventionality. The religious impulse has often played an important part in art, though appearing less as a definitely formulated doctrine than as a new spirit or a cyclic wave of evolution that was reflected more or less in all departments of life.

Thus it can hardly be maintained that Christian art owed its origin to the church or to theological doctrines; but it was gradually moulded by the wave of emotional aspiration and mental exaltation which under certain conditions seemed to be aroused by the Christian doctrines. Under the new impulse the soul of the people was stirred and the senses set in a ferment from which an entirely new form of art was born. The new spirit manifested itself on the one hand in intense yearning for infinity and on the other hand in a scholastic subtlety which infused new rhythms into art and turned creative imagination towards ideals unlike those sought in preceding ages. How far these ideals could be called Christian is another question; in any case their origin was in a transcendentalism that stood in direct opposition to the immanence which characterized the religious conception of antiquity.

A few words about the general modifications of the religious ideals most plainly discernible in the evolution of European art may not be out of place here. To begin with, a few statements by the German author Groddeck may serve to throw light on the classic idea of immanence in nature as understood by the Greeks:

"A fundamental difference between the modern world and the antique lies in the relation of religion to nature. The Greek saw God everywhere. Nature was for him something to be

greatly stimulated by religion. Religion may shrink from making art its handmaid.

X. This too will agree with the statement
made in another chapter about the
symbol of Greek art.

ART AND RELIGION

worshipped and feared. We modern men with our cold intellectualism cannot understand why the Greeks of the Great Age maintained such peculiar customs in connection with the felling of a tree or the hunting of an animal. We smile at their superstitious fears. But unfortunately in our day reverence has disappeared along with fear. We now stand in no other relation to nature than as the user to that which is used. . . . Nature has been robbed of her divine aspect. This change in our attitude towards nature is certainly closely connected with our progress in technical and material civilization, but we have paid the penalty in loss of inner cultural and spiritual qualities. The man of antiquity did not imagine himself the centre of the world and the ruler of the earth—rather the contrary.”

The feeling of unity with nature was doubtless one of the primary conditions for antique art. They conceived nature as ensouled; they felt themselves involved in the organic life of nature, which thereby became for them stamped with something of their own individuality. Their pantheism was anthropomorphic, which fact led to the establishment of the human figure as the highest ideal of art. “Wonders are many but none more wonderful than man,” was said in the “Antigone” of Sophocles—a verse that could stand as a motto for all Greek art from the Golden Age onward.

* This is hardly the place to enter upon a discussion of how far the Greek conception of art and beauty was bound up with ethical and religious ideals. The central and ruling idea for them in art as in life was the principle of balance and harmonious proportions. It is clearly enunciated by philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, and it is of fundamental importance in the creations of the great sculptors and architects. But the origin of this principle and the standard by which it was tested was the human figure: the symmetry of its construction, the

Rhythmic
harmony
as Greek
art

The basic law is unalterably.

* A superficial explanation. We must go back further.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

harmonious proportions of its parts, its tectonic organism, had for them the highest symbolic significance and artistic value. They held that man was akin to the gods, and in his ideal perfection became like them. The anthropomorphic ideal in art was a natural result of their conception of life and of the world they lived in.

The question, where does the spirit of Christianity find its fullest expression? may be answered in many different ways, according to how religion itself is understood. To us it seems natural that as Christianity was a spiritual movement originating in the East, so it was there, in the Eastern parts of the then existing Roman Empire, that its spirit and essence found their best reflection in art. It was well within the general tendency of Christianity to seek the highest ideal of life beyond the bounds of material existence, or, as often has been said, to turn the eye towards the infinite. The art whose aim it was to give expression to such a concept, naturally would not waste itself in representations of mere material objects, however beautiful, but would rather seek to sublimate the earthly form into an image of more purely spiritual character. The problem of this art was highly abstract, its solution could only come from within. It may be that this always is the case, to a certain extent, in an art that seeks inspiration in spiritual movements, and which symbolically expresses religious ideals, though the symbol may be direct or indirect, abstract or concrete. In the former case art speaks through rhythm of line and through qualities that have a direct symbolical significance; in the latter case it borrows the speech

ART AND RELIGION

of nature and expresses itself by means of representation of organic form. We shall have the opportunity of discussing this diversity in what follows.

No one who has carefully studied the Byzantine mosaics of the sixth century can deny that they have an intense artistic significance and great decorative beauty. Form as a means of expression has here a more direct emotional value than in antique art; it is not weighed down by the necessity to imitate nature. The golden background and the deep-toned jewels of these mosaics intensify the suggestive power of the highly conventionalized figures and suffuse them with an atmosphere of ecstasy which well accords with the religious yearning towards the infinite. The inherited æsthetic refinement and the ceremonious court-life of the Byzantines provided material for the creation of the new emotional symbolism. The pursuit of the abstract came more naturally to them than to the people of the West; their emotional life was dominated by the general Eastern tendency to drift into vague poetic dreams and contemplation of immaterial beauty.

In the West the Gothic, later on, adopted similar emotional ideals as subjects for artistic presentation, but its forms of expression were never so abstract or sublimated by feeling and imagination as those of Byzantine art. Transcendentalism was here also an element of fundamental importance, but the Christian spirit that inspired the Gothic was in closer contact with life and reality than was the religiosity of the East; it was permeated by the Western love of action and movement in art. This depended naturally on the fact that the Christian

ESSENTIALS IN ART

culture of Western Europe had been moulded by vigorous and active young nations who gradually replaced the older. They had an altogether new craving for realistic character in art unknown to the Byzantines. They create new living types and dramatic forms of expression. They describe and narrate. In spite of all their spiritual yearnings they revel in reality. No matter how much the Gothic cathedral statues seem to shrink into themselves with ascetic repugnance to the outer world or to stretch out in boundless yearning towards the beyond, one may generally find in them some traits that show how closely they are bound to earth. Their artistic significance is often due to a compromise between abstract synthetic line and concrete plastic form. The further the Gothic develops the more it steep itself in the worldly delight of decorative form and undulating line and the more does religious solemnity give place to playful virtuosity.

The art of the Renaissance which sprang up in the soil of Humanism made fertile by the reawakened spirit of the Antique was inspired at its culmination by ideals similar to those of classic antiquity. X Once more the conception of nature was coloured with the ideal of immanence. The recognition of law as the guiding principle of life that throbbed in all organic forms, gradually calmed the passionate yearnings for "the beyond" and transmuted dreams of transcendental bliss into aspirations towards the joy of life on earth and the pursuit of mundane knowledge or scientific investigation. L

The spirit of the new age brought, indeed,

ART AND RELIGION

far-reaching changes in the field of artistic representation ; broadly speaking, it led to increased interest in the visible world and the whole range of material phenomena as well as to greater efforts to achieve in art an appearance of actual bodily form. To begin with, this increased desire for material reality developed a new passion for scientific experiment. Painters were inclined to lose sight of the higher aims of art in their eagerness to represent objects " as they really are," to quote Vasari's expression in regard to the art of Masaccio. The further they progressed in their studies of the antique and the more deeply they were imbued with its spirit of anthropomorphic pantheism, the more conscious became their efforts to achieve the ideal perfection of organic form, harmonious proportion, and tectonic unity. As the spirit of the time became more permeated with classic ideals, so the idealizing tendency in art grew stronger, the naïve delight in nature was gradually superseded by conscious ideation ; and organic form in art became more an architectonic work than a copy from nature.

At length the Baroque style appeared as a reaction against the Renaissance with its striving after entirely different kinds of illusion. The artists of the Baroque no longer concentrated their efforts on the representation of objective appearances or on the clear definition of organic form as such ; what they sought to express was rather the subjective impression, a vision of form released from natural limitations, scattered and dissolved by the force of unrestrained movement. Their compositions instead of being an arrangement of balanced and equalized

ESSENTIALS IN ART

forces were filled with dynamic effects and violent contrasts. This tension of sudden and violent emotion found its expression in a movement that carried art beyond the bounds of objective form. The general tendency of the Baroque mode of expression is clearly related to that of the Gothic, but its inspiration is less transcendental than is the spirit of medieval art. It is the spirit of the contra-Reformation and Jesuitry, which pervades the most characteristic creations of the Baroque, and this was not aimed at any liberation from the sensual world, but at an emotional intoxication, an ecstasy, the pursuit of which was apt to lead the adventurous soul far from the balanced and peaceful state which was the ideal of the Renaissance. It was like stormy autumn after a sunny summer.

From a deeper standpoint, the Baroque period must be regarded as less spiritual than the Renaissance. The direction of this art is not towards emancipation from or elucidation of the delusions of material phenomena, but towards the creation of new illusions or optical deceptions replete with the most pleasing impression of sensuous beauty. Its magnificent churches became more like foyers of opera-houses than like temples for worship; and its angels and saints mere mundane beauties glowing with the profane fire of the senses.

Then comes the Rococo and makes play with the forms of the Baroque, giving them more freedom and suppleness. The opera becomes vaudeville; the saints shepherds and shepherdesses. The stream of spiritual life becomes still more shallow. The Neo-classic style then renews the bond with the

ART AND RELIGION

ideals of the antique and thereby places art again on a broader spiritual foundation, but as an art movement it is highly intellectual, more fostered by the scientific and literary interests of that time than supported by such a general and spontaneous will and enthusiasm as we find in the antique, the Gothic, or the Renaissance. This is probably also the reason why it soon sinks into the sands of theoretical doctrines and does not set free any greater fund of spiritual power for the renewal of the inner life in art.

X As a whole, European art, in spite of all variations of style, remained closely bound up in the problem of material form. Its true field of activity is the world of objective phenomena ; it was only occasionally, during periods of a more intense emotional life, that it entered upon a path leading away from organic form towards the abstract and the purely subjective. At such times emotion assumed a greater appearance of reality than the objects of the phenomenal world, which were reduced to the rank of mere material for pictorial symbology and poetic imagery. But Western culture for the most part provided no permanent soil for the growth of such an art. X The emotional and religious yeast was soon swept away in the flood of material desires and the pursuit of outward appearances. Whatever subjects this art dealt with, whether it was religious or profane, still the real starting-point was the concrete bodily motive or some anecdotal interest. European art devoted itself so completely to representation and description that the Western world has at last almost forgotten that art may be a poetic creation

ESSENTIALS IN ART

capable of directly expressing spiritual and emotional impulses.

One need not have seen much of Chinese painting to perceive that pictorial art is not necessarily dependent on imitation of nature as generally understood. Even without the intermediary of material illusion it may express inspiring emotional qualities (present in all true art); it may arouse one's perception of the life and soul in things—without a complete description of their organic structure and composition. This is particularly well accomplished in Chinese art where an extremely abstract mode of representation is made compatible with the most intimate and living descriptions of nature. This supple vitality, this intense love of movement, both inner and outer, plainly distinguishes old Chinese painting from the more or less abstract primitive art of Europe. There is indeed in both cases a certain denaturalization of objective forms by means of decorative conventions (or abstract deductions), but the modes of procedure are quite different. In the primitive art of Europe the aim is accomplished through a schematic simplification of form and a deliberate accentuation of contour, which brings out the decorative beauty of the symbols, without necessarily enhancing their expressional value. In Chinese painting the forms are sublimated into vehicles for living rhythm, which may be accomplished by means of tone as well as by line. The transformation here more than in the primitive art of Europe is a conscious inner process of recasting impressions, which is intended to enhance the suggestion of movement and life. Chinese painting proves

60

18. Reducing them to the common denominator
of Rhythm

ART AND RELIGION

beyond question the fact (discernible also in primitive art) that the artistic life of a picture by no means depends on faithful imitation of nature or correct representation of organic form.

We have also tried to show that form, as such, cannot be regarded as the essential vehicle of life in art. It is in itself dead and expressionless if it is not vitalized by rhythm. ~~Rhythm~~ Rhythm is the pulse-beat in a work of art. It transmits to the spectator those elements of inner or outer movement which inspire the artist, and by it a connection is established with the pulse that throbs in the spectator's own organism. The more intensely we feel the rhythm in a work of art, the more is our own vitality stimulated and the deeper is our feeling for the living form, the movement, nay, the whole work as if it existed in our own organism. ~~It~~ It is through the medium of rhythm that we may enter into a work of art and experience something of the exuberance and glow of the creative energy that fired the artist's soul. If the rhythm has once opened the door for us, we are led as if by an unseen hand further and further towards the hidden springs of life from which the artist drew his inspiration; our own vitality wakens at the call of the artist, we respond to this appeal and in some measure we share with him the joy of creation. Rhy

Through what organs this subjective merging of our own perceptive consciousness into the life of the work of art is accomplished, it is not necessary to inquire here in detail; we only wish to draw attention to the fact that the sense of touch is a most important factor in the interpretation of our visual

ESSENTIALS IN ART

impressions. Rhythm plays, however, on other organs as well in our perceptive system without our always knowing how the message reaches us. But certainly the responsiveness of our own instrument is of the greatest importance, and it is sad to think how many there are to whom art makes no appeal.

* If one explains the appreciation and assimilation of art in this manner, if one sees in rhythm the real instrument for the transmission of life, the revelation of movement, and for the translation of expression in art, then one will easily understand that the formal method of representation is not necessarily of decisive importance for the inner significance of a work. Rhythm can be conveyed by means of relatively concrete as well as in abstract form, it can be expressed by line or tone, plastically or pictorially. But it cannot be achieved by a mechanical, faithfully detailed reproduction of outer form; it must be created from within, out of the union between the artist and his motive. Rhythm is the soul of nature, and it must be evolved by the soul of man directed by his creative energy (or spiritual will). It does not appear in a work of art by chance, nor does it come at call of the pedant or the scholiast; only genius can command it.

The æsthetic definition inherent in our conception of rhythm concerns less the relation of a work of art to its outer material subject than to the inner motive of spiritual, emotional, or physical life, which inspired the creative faculty of the master.

As rhythm, however, according to our explanation, is a subjective phenomenon, an abstract

* It can, if rhythm is inherent in the form reproduced

φ Manifestly false!

ART AND RELIGION

quality, it must naturally find its best expression in modes or schools of art which are not hampered by an absorbing interest in the imitation of nature.

X Abstract forms of art such as architecture and ornament often display the most striking qualities of rhythm, and in pictorial art, with which we are here most closely concerned, it is certain that the importance of rhythm increases in the same proportion as the slavish dependence on material form diminishes. X This relative emancipation from the bonds of material form corresponds on the other hand, as we have seen, with the evolution of the whole emotional life of the people in the direction of transcendentalism. We have quoted as examples the early Byzantine and Gothic art, two lines of artistic development which were both stirred by the emotional impulse of Christianity and which in regard to their form of expression were wholly dependent on the quality of rhythmic movement of line. An essentially religious art which seeks to rise above the sensuous world of phenomena naturally, always has particular need of the vitalizing power of rhythm. X

Nor is this general rule contradicted by classic Greek art as might easily be supposed from its persistent devotion to the representation of organic form—here rhythm was expressed in balance and harmonious proportion, it was objectivized and made to serve in the demonstration of the interplay of organic forces. Its function here is perhaps less directly emotional—the spiritual atmosphere of antiquity did not conduce to emotional exaltation—but not on that account less significant, for it is through

*All this shows a signal misunderstanding
of the fundamental facts & lack of
understanding*

ESSENTIALS IN ART

rhythm that the life-flow and the inner structure of the ideal organism are revealed.

It is only when art entirely loses itself in representation and description that the organizing power of rhythm disappears. The creative energy is then diverted into side-channels, it sinks into the sands of scientific analysis and historical narration and is lost. The desire faithfully to reproduce material objects closes the vision to the deeper aims of art. We can see this from our own experience. If we find ourselves before a carefully worked out naturalistic picture the first thing that attracts our attention is, in nine cases out of ten, the descriptive motive, and it requires a distinct effort to get away from this purely literary or historical interest to a strictly æsthetic analysis of the work. Undoubtedly the greater number of spectators will not take the trouble to do this; for them, consequently, art has no independent inherent value.

That which is not material is not necessarily spiritual, even in art, and emotional intoxication is indeed mostly a purely sensuous condition (*cf.* the art of the Baroque). The deeper spiritual qualities will be revealed rather in the harmonious relationship of soul to body, rhythm to form. During the Golden Age of antiquity this harmonious relationship was sought in the perfect proportions and the organic form of the ideal human figure. The ancients anthropomorphized art as well as nature and looked upon the ideal man as a divine being. Thus the creations of art assumed a religious significance of its own independent of the mythological or historical motives they represented. The subject was of little

ART AND RELIGION

consequence in that regard ; the decisive factor was the concept of immanence.

X In later times when European art followed the same general current as the antique with regard to the problem of form, the desire for anthropomorphic symbols was not elevated by the belief in the divinity of man which ensouled the creations of the highest classic period. Even the great masters of the Renaissance in their happiest moments did not attain to the same religious conviction of the immanence of the divine in nature and man. The Christian conception of nature as inherently evil and of man as a miserable sinner had already been too deeply ingrained in the minds of men to be supplanted by the ideal vision of antiquity. X Man's faith and trust in objective reality were shattered, his realization of his inner identity with the soul of nature was disturbed by the consciousness of sin, the fear of retribution, and the yearning for redemption. It was no longer possible to find ideal beauty or religious and spiritual harmony in the organic forms of the material world. But the creative was still directed towards corporeal anthropomorphic imagery. The outer garment was preserved even though the wearer of it was dead. Then art was finally bound down to concrete representation. Never again even during periods of exalted emotional life, when the incitation of the Christian religion was most active, could art free itself from the insistence of material form. Even the Gothic shows the same anthropomorphic tendency, though at times it did violate organic unity of form in the interests of emotion. X

Western art thus, in later times, never attained

*This para. is much better expressed both by
Addington Symonds & by March Phillips.*

ESSENTIALS IN ART

the same spiritual value of expression as it had during antiquity. It became in great measure a compromise when it devoted itself to religious subjects. It was never able to free itself from the dominance of the human figure as a standard of representation, because it had nothing better to put in its place. It never found the path that leads beyond the differentiations of the material world and the limitations of space towards that great rhythm which blends life with infinity.

This was the path of Chinese art. We have seen how this Eastern art sought to pierce through the veils of the phenomenal world and to awake a suggestion of a purer and richer existence beyond the bounds of sensuous perception. X Man is to it but as a grain of sand upon the shores of the great ocean of life, a tone in the harmony of the universe, and like all other living things he finds his artistic significance in the spiritual rhythm that flows through all that lives. His form is a symbol like all else in objective nature, but his spiritual nature is an exhaustless fount of life and beauty. In his soul is mirrored a greater and more beautiful reality than any we can behold with our eyes or perceive with our senses. There alone all limitations are dissolved, all discords harmonized. The more clearly the image is mirrored there, the deeper will be the religious value of the creation. More than this no art can reveal.

III

ART AND RELIGION DURING THE RENAISSANCE



ART AND RELIGION DURING THE RENAISSANCE

AN HISTORICAL ESSAY

I

IN the whole domain of higher culture the Renaissance implied a revival of the idea of antiquity. Even though it was often in forms that were quite unlike those of earlier days, yet was the driving power a living enthusiasm for the philosophy and artistic ideals of classic antiquity. It is true that this admiration for ancient culture became somewhat vague and indefinite, it did not actually resuscitate heathendom, either practically or theoretically, but it brought with it a certain degree of emancipation in religious and moral ideas, in the midst of which Christianity, in its narrower sense, that is to say church-religion, had to find a place.

It certainly seems that among the upper classes the influence of the Church for a time was seriously menaced by the growing enthusiasm for ancient ideals of life, although the outer fabric, fashioned in the Middle Ages, remained relatively unshaken. From the outer standpoint one might speak of a religious decline during the blossoming time of the Renaissance, a deliberate attempt to get away from Christian church-religion: in the inner sense, however, it would be wrong to say that there was any waning of religious life. On the contrary the spiritual creative power, that finds its highest

ESSENTIALS IN ART

expression in art and poetry, flowed fresher and clearer than before. The causes for this readjustment of religious life, which had such a deep significance for art, were naturally manifold, and had their origin in times long past, but one such of particular force was, as Burckhardt brings out in his "*Kultur der Renaissance*," the advancing decay of the Christian Church, of which he says :

"When the Church grew corrupt, men ought to have distinguished, and in spite of all else held fast to religion. But it is easier to make such a demand than to live up to it. All are not calm and patient enough to endure the strain of a lasting contradiction between a principle and its outer form. The decay of the Church bears the heaviest responsibility that history has ever laid at the door of any institution : it (the Church) used all kinds of force to thrust forward corrupt learning as unpolluted truth, and in the assurance of its own inviolability it abandoned itself to the most dreadful immorality ; to maintain its position of power, it dealt a death-blow to the soul and conscience of the people, and drove many of the most gifted, who inwardly had broken with it, to exasperation and infidelity."

In the ample description this authoritative writer gives of ecclesiastical conditions at the beginning of the Renaissance, he explains his accusations more closely. Those who are interested can there find striking evidence of the superstition and immorality that were rampant in the Church, and of the drawing away of the most highly endowed personalities towards other spheres of spiritual influence.

The conflict between the Church and humanism was, however, very unequal, for the latter never was so well organized or so definitely formulated as the former had been for a century past.

In the beginning the humanists did not have so

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

very much to formulate. Actual knowledge of the institutions of antiquity was still, in the early half of the fifteenth century, rather limited, and no effort to organize heathen religious practices was attempted. It was not so much certain teachings and systems that were of importance to the classic humanists as the collective impression of the greatness of their predecessors, a feeling that the ancients had access to springs of spiritual knowledge which the Church had closed. The almost daily discoveries of forgotten literature and art treasures naturally intensified more and more the feeling of admiration and longing for a culture that could produce values of such inspiring greatness and beauty.

In the meantime Christianity lived on, holding its place not only in the body of the victorious Church, but also as a moral consciousness ingrained in the people for generations. Its influence could not disappear, even though the admiration for former times rose higher and higher. It became, so to say, a sounding board on which the new impressions were tuned and tested. The whole resulting music, which was capable of leading the way and inspiring souls, was a composition in which certainly the leading *motif* was admiration for antiquity tinted with heathenism, but wherein Christianity still remained as a supporting undertone. Many of the most important humanists sought to permeate ancient philosophy with the spirit of Christianity and to give a Christian interpretation to the religious expositions of Plato and other Greek thinkers. Their works were searched for confirmation of the Christian conceptions. Indeed, Plato came to have

ESSENTIALS IN ART

a significance almost equal to that of the Christian Church Fathers.

Christianity, on the other hand, was treated with as little consideration and was made the vehicle for purely heathen conceptions. The angels were identified with the genii of antiquity and, in speaking of saints, Giovanni Pontano uses the word "deus" in place of "divus." A singularly illuminating story touching this blending of heathen and Christian conceptions is mentioned by Tizio in his autobiography—

"When in the year 1526 Siena was attacked by those who had been driven out of the city, the old canon of the cathedral left his bed and remembering what was written in the third book of Macrobius, read a mass, and then pronounced the form of conjuration as set forth in the book just mentioned, but with this modification, that in place of saying 'Thee mother earth and Jupiter do I conjure,' said, 'Thee earth and thee Lord Christ do I conjure.' This was repeated on the two following days, and after that the enemy drew off."

The story is a very characteristic evidence of the indiscriminate way in which men drew their inspiration from either heathen or Christian sources, just as they appeared adapted to the circumstances, and how little bound they were by rigid doctrines or dogmatic teachings. This interblending becomes of more significance in the field of art than in other domains, because here it is more a question of spirit and inspiration, than of any logical formulation of religious conceptions.

Art in a great measure remained the servant of the Church, and as such was occupied with traditional Biblical and legendary subjects. Certainly also the presentation of mythological and profane

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

motives began to be cultivated in ever-increasing quantity—portraiture in particular received a great impetus from the strong feeling for individuality that marked the men of the Renaissance—but the overwhelming majority of artists occupied themselves with Christian motives and produced their works largely for the decoration of churches and chapels.

If one is to judge of the religious attitude and significance of art by its motives and sphere of activity, one must come to the conclusion that the art of the Renaissance remained strictly Christian, and that its difference in regard to religion from that of the Middle Ages was very slight. It matters little that the illustrative motives were somewhat modified in accordance with the taste of the time, since they were in any case drawn from the same sources and were represented in a similar spirit.

On a closer study of the art of the Renaissance, we find that the artistic interpretation that is there given to the traditional religious motives is fundamentally altered. It breathes a new spirit, the creative imagination seeks to invest the old conceptions with a new meaning, much as the humanists read Plato's thoughts into Christianity, and *vice versa*. One may choose almost which one will of the more popular Biblical figures represented, as well during the Middle Ages as in the Renaissance, and there find confirmation of this. We recall, for instance, the figures of David. On the cathedrals of the Middle Ages he is often represented as a Christian saint, an old king in long cloak, playing upon his harp. If it be a perfect Gothic statue

ESSENTIALS IN ART

swathed and enveloped in flowing lines, then the whole composition breathes an atmosphere re-echoing with Psalmodic sentiment, yearning towards a heavenly goal beyond the skies. In Italian art of the Renaissance the old king David is replaced by the youth, the shepherd boy as the triumphant liberator, with the head of Goliath at his feet. He serves as an excuse for a display of that strength and suppleness that are involved in the problem of representation of youth: he is unclothed and shown in heroic nakedness like the Greek figures of athletes. Most of the great Florentine sculptors tried their hand upon this problem: I need only recall Donatello, Pollajuolo, Michel Angelo. All these and many others presented David nude as a classical ideal figure, provided with the attributes of the Biblical hero, but which often might serve as well for some other illustrative motive. As regards Donatello's bronze David of the year 1430, I have elsewhere tried to show that the Biblical rôle does not fit the figure, which seems to be conceived in direct accordance with the youthful figures of Praxiteles. This is all the more remarkable, since Donatello is counted as one of the most clearly stamped realists of the Renaissance, one of those who most completely broke with Gothic formalism, and looked to nature for rejuvenation of his art. But the artistic basis of his new creations he found in the antique.

The same is true of the majority of the best fifteenth-century sculptors. All the prophets and apostles that were produced at that time are more nearly allied to the antique gods, heroes, and

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

orators than to the Christian patriarchs and saints of the Middle Ages. Their religion is not that of Christian self-denial and yearning towards the beyond, but a sturdy self-reliance, a feeling of inherent individual worth. The ethico-religious import is in no wise thinner or weaker than before; on the contrary, it is more intense, more practical and vital.

These vigorous personalities that blossomed in the springtime of the Renaissance found no especial opposition between Christianity and the Greek antique as their imagination pictured it. Their admiration for antiquity carried them over many contradictions that might seem serious to us. Their true religion lay in their creative joy, in their sense of power to produce expressions of ideal form and beauty. As Tizio employed a heathen formula of conjuration with the needful change of names to meet the requirements of Christianity, so the sculptors clothed their prophets in forms borrowed from the antique almost regardless of their names or their significance.

A very illuminating example of such a fusion of heathen and Christian conceptions is afforded by the "impresa" or device of the well-known Florentine banker, Francesco Sachetti—a centaur bearing a sling with the inscription "*à mon pouvoir*," sometimes completed by the motto: "*Tutanti puero patriam Deus arma ministrat*." As this motto clearly shows, the sling is derived from representations of David, and was probably designed to suggest an abbreviated allusion to the patriotic and moral import that, according to the

ESSENTIALS IN ART

conceptions of that time, was inherent in the David motive. But the shepherd boy himself is replaced quite unconcernedly by a centaur. Whether that bore any special symbolic allusion we do not know. This classic hybrid was at all events an evident tribute to the artistic and humanistic symbology of the new age, that scarcely hindered the highly educated Florentine financier from incorporating in his device a Christian religious idea. It was, as said of a similar symbol, a plastic formula in which was blended the God-worship of the Middle Ages with the self-reliance of the men of the Renaissance. Many similar formulas were fashioned both in sculpture and in painting, whose symbolic significance could be read in either the Christian or the heathen sense. The works of sculpture just mentioned, in a certain measure, come into this category, their illustrative purport is Christian, but their artistic import is heathen. If we hold to our original point of view, that the religious significance of a work of art does not depend upon its illustrative motive, but on its artistic import, the emotional conception, then it follows that there is something expressed in the art of the Renaissance which is foreign to Christianity.

The central and essential point is, that the human figure again comes into its full rights as an organism composed of body and of soul. There is no longer, as in the Middle Ages, question of a dematerializing or a symbolic interpretation of emotional aspirations that sought the infinite outside of man. On the contrary, there was a conviction that the physical organism should be made

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

as realistic as possible, and that through its perfection alone the spiritual import could find expression. This subjective symbolism, that in the late Gothic degenerated into a sort of sentimental reverie in floating lines and forms etherealized, is thrust aside by strongly projected three dimensional bodies, modelled with light and shade or plastically fashioned in the round expressing, not an abstract idea, but conceptions of bodily extension in space. Leonardo, who indeed summarized many of the principles peculiar to the art of the Renaissance, says, amongst other things, that the highest honour of the art of painting is rotundity, that is to say, presentation of three-dimensional bodies standing free in space.

Fully to understand the dominating significance of this as distinct from earlier art-forms, one may in thought, for instance, compare the Byzantine mosaics or the Gothic paintings with Masaccio's familiar frescoes in the Brancacci chapel. One is surprised here, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, to meet with figures that, not only assert themselves in full bodily mass, but even stand out in a scene that is convincingly real. They move freely in space, and there is, in spite of all simplification, a landscape with solid ground to rest on, a distant horizon and air, that envelops and subdues the figures. It was evidently not only human beings but also their surroundings that now, at the beginning of the Renaissance, became objects of interest to artists. Once more the appeal of the outer world to the senses acted as a powerful inducement to artistic creation, though not in such a

ESSENTIALS IN ART

way as to produce a shallow naturalism. When we speak of naturalism in the art of the Renaissance, it must not be understood in the modern sense. Nature never became the prime object or the source of inspiration for the great artists of that time. They thought much as did Delacroix when he wrote: "It is far more important for the artist to approach more nearly to the ideal he bears within and which is his, than to grasp the fleeting ideal offered by Nature."

✕ Meanwhile we must admit that there was serious danger of art itself being lost sight of in the pursuit of theoretical studies in anatomy, perspective, and the like; the naturalist's joy of discovery became sometimes so strong that it could hardly be dominated by the creative imagination. But that was so only in the case of a few of the less gifted artists; with the greatest among them scientific study and research remained subservient to imagination. ✕

✕ If, for instance, Masaccio's apostles had been merely more natural, more solidly realistic than those of earlier masters, they would hardly have risen to the classic level, nor would they have become inspiring models for succeeding generations. That which makes them so incomparably great, lies in their power to compel our recognition of the existence of a greater, nobler state, than any we experience in daily life. These figures seem filled with irresistible force and an infinite fund of inner possibilities. They know no ordinary narrow subjective limitations. They dwell upon the timeless planes of heroic being. ✕

The correspondences with the ideal conceptions

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

of Antiquity are striking—the same basic ethical values can be traced in both cases—but at the same time a deep-lying essential difference makes itself manifest, which can be said to consist in this, that ~~X~~ antique art deals with Man, the Renaissance with men. In the former case ideal perfection of type or race is sought, the essential divinity of man is suggested symbolically through the perfect proportions of the human figure, but there is no attempt to express more delicate shades of individual character. Such motives were first worked out by the artists of the Renaissance. They do not rest satisfied with the harmony of proportion in form, but strive to express something beyond: a psychic element, not directly dependent on perfected unity of form, but on facial expression, the movement of the limbs, and so on. Personality is accorded an importance it never had in the great classic time. Subjective emotion is cultivated at the cost of objective harmony. ~~X~~

*Class
+
Rena
art*

What is gained in regard to individual life and power of expression was lost in the limitation and restraint of the ideal type. The Renaissance no longer created Gods, it only gave the divine reflection in subjective form.

II

The particular conception of ideals and forms in art that we have tried to indicate is supported by contemporary treatises and tracts. There was in the Renaissance a marked tendency to attempt

ESSENTIALS IN ART

theoretical explanations of the principles of art and beauty. It was not enough; that art and beauty were worshipped as God-like—"divino" had become a customary epithet for art—the demand was made for a philosophic explanation of the divine dignity and significance of art.

All these treatises, much divided among themselves and of very various value in regard to the formal directions they had to offer to artists, agree in this, that they all see in artistic creation a law-bound operation.

This essential conception is worth making note of, for it contains an ethico-religious import of the greatest consequence. Practically applied it has become a basis for the creation of the highest classic values, especially in architecture, where obedience to law is most necessary and most apparent. Besides it is evident that, in so far as artistic creation is regarded as the expression of definable laws and proportions, to that extent does it attain a spiritual value comparable to that of religion. It becomes a reflection in the special domain of art of the ordaining and creating principle, that religion also manifests, when it awakens in us feelings of union with something universal.

We are acquainted with the way in which art was apprehended in the great classic period of antiquity, when also attempts were made to interpret theoretically art as a law-bound operation. New life and fresh significance were given this conception by the effort of the Renaissance to blend this law-bound character with the intense interest felt in Nature's manifold creation. It may be well

* Abund. New Science is largely Nature
as revealed by science is largely an expression of
definable laws & proportions, but it does not
attain the value of a spiritual religion.

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

to record briefly some of the observations made by the first, and, in some respects, most important of the artists who spoke of the laws governing art and beauty.

We refer to Leone Battista Alberti, the great architect, who worked during the middle of the fifteenth century, often honoured by his countrymen with the title of "The Florentine Vitruvius." His writings on painting, "*Della Pittura*," on sculpture, "*Della Statua*," and on architecture, "*De re Edificatoria*," afforded the first complete exposition of the theory and practice of the liberal arts.

They handed on, in a personal and living form, knowledge of the fundamental æsthetic views of classic antiquity, especially as found in Vitruvius's treatise on architecture (of the time of the Emperor Augustus), which in its turn was drawn from Greek sources. At the same time it must be said that Alberti leaves much to show that his theories are not merely fruits of æsthetic studies, but also of personal application to art, to painting as well as to architecture. No theoretical works of such wide and general significance as the treatises of Alberti were produced later. Leonardo's notes on the theory of art, which in many ways indicate an important step forward, did not reach the press till well on in the seventeenth century, since they met with adverse fate and were in a disordered and fragmentary condition. Other theorists, such as Biondo, Vasari, Vignola, Scamozzi, Lomazzo, and many more, confine themselves chiefly to certain definite branches of art, architecture or

ESSENTIALS IN ART

painting, or else launch out into purely abstract philosophical speculations, that do not give us much light on the question of creative art itself, or of the relation of the artist to his work.

Although Alberti in many places says that the highest perfection in art cannot be attained by the use of rules, but is dependent on the disposition that nature has bestowed upon the artist, yet he seeks, for the benefit of himself and others, to define all that pertains to the mode and method of artistic expression. He produced, among other works, a complete theory of perspective, which was of great practical value to succeeding generations. Alberti sees in beauty the end and aim of art. The question for him is how it can be presented in material form. In the introduction to his treatise on architecture he writes :

"Genius brings forth form, nature produces the material. For the former is needed concentration and creative power, for the latter selection and adaptation: and I have also thought that neither the one nor the other is sufficient in itself without the work of an experienced artist, who knows how to bring form and material into harmony."

He finds beauty in the union of opposites, form and matter, soul and body. It results when those things that are diverse are brought into unity.

"As tones from a violin, where the high and low strings correspond with one another, and those that lie between are tuned to them, the differences of the tones are blended into a wondrous and full-toned harmony, that in the highest degree charms the soul."

In other words, beauty, conceived as form, is a harmonious consonance or blending of opposites,* a unity, in which things diverse and different are

*Alberti is questionable. Does not Alberti rather
go to the heart of harmony as in music
architecture? The problem: beauty of nature?*

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

harmonized. The principle is most directly formulated in reference to architecture, where it is worked out by means of an art of proportion corresponding to that of music; but the same conception is applied also by Alberti in another connection to the plastic arts in accord with the methods of antiquity. Alberti returns generally with special predilection to the idea of harmony when he speaks of beauty. Amongst other things he says:

"To be brief, we wish to declare that beauty is harmony of all the parts with intelligence in the whole, so that no part can be augmented, diminished or changed without deterioration of the whole."

"It is the work and merit of harmony," he says a little further on in the same chapter, "to conjoin in such a completely law-bound manner links that by nature are separated, that they by their reciprocal relation correspond with the ideal. . . . Harmony lives not in the body as a whole, nor in the separate limbs; I would say, that it has participation in the intelligent soul, that it embraces laws for human life, and exercises an irresistible influence upon all these."

To give an impression of how universally the idea is conceived, that Alberti most nearly associates with the essence of beauty, the following words may be quoted:

"Everything that is produced by Nature has its measure in the law of harmony. Nature strives not otherwise than that its products may be perfect. But that condition cannot be attained, if harmony is lacking, for then the highest active consonance of all the parts vanishes."

Just as for the ancient Pythagoreans, and also for Plato and Aristotle, harmony represents for Alberti the highest idea of unity, the most complete expression we can think of for the law-abiding quality, that reigns in the creative soul of the

Alberti obviously wishes to describe the rhythmic beat as all manifestation of nature & art, but he has not understood his subject clearly & is at times in the dark for expression.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

world ; but so far as known, none of the ancient philosophers applied this idea to the essence of Beauty. That is regarded as Alberti's merit. Art also is thereby placed in direct relation to the Absolute, for, according to the Pythagorean point of view adopted by Alberti, harmony was the expression of the highest world-intelligence.

In the second book of his work on painting Alberti sets forth also some general ideas on art, which throw light on his philosophico-religious standpoint :

" Painting contains in itself a truly god-like power, in that, like friendship, it not only causes those who are far away to seem near by, but even the dead to seem to live again after many centuries."

He further holds it valuable in that painting represents the gods, thereby furthering piety and religion. As to the origin of the art of painting he has the following beautiful metaphor :

" Adapting myself to an utterance of the poets, I used to say, that same Narcissus, who was changed into a flower, was the true discoverer of the art of painting, for the reason, that the art of painting is the blossom of all the arts ; so the story of Narcissus also in another respect is appropriate here, for it may well be said that painting is no other than the recording of the artistic image, just as the fountain reflected the image of Narcissus ! "

Here we have, in poetic form, an intimation of how Alberti, like the best of the early Renaissance artists, combines interest in nature with the worship of beauty ; the fountain's clear mirror reflects the pure features of Narcissus, but at the same time the youth is changed into a flower which in its beauty and fragrance symbolizes his soul.

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

Further on Alberti gives a very accurate account of the various methods and forms of expression, composition, lighting, colours, and so forth used in the art of painting; these matters are too technical for us to consider in this connection, but one or two of his remarks on the aim of painting may be quoted with advantage.

"For the artist the aim of painting may lie in that which will bring him more gratitude, good-will and honour, than riches. The painter, whose work charms not only the eyes of the beholder but also his soul, attains to that. How this may be attained I spoke about when treating of composition and colour. My conviction is that in order to attain this the painter must be a good man and must have a sound education. Everyone knows how much more readily the good will of his fellow-citizens may be won by the goodness of a man than by his greatest industry and skill in art."

In this, as in so many other regards, Alberti follows in the footsteps of Vitruvius.

The Roman theorist accentuates, as do also Plato and other Greek philosophers, the importance of character and sensibility in artistic creation, but that which is so remarkable in Alberti is that he prefers before all else a pure humanity in the artist; he must be a complete and high-minded man to fashion the perfect work of art. Similar standards were evolved by Leonardo showing how such ethical demands, made on the creator of art, were very general and deep-rooted during the best years of the Renaissance. We may do well to listen for a while to what Leonardo has said in this direction. Just as ideal painting in his thought is the highest of all sciences and arts, so also must its representative be the best and wisest of all men. "Those who

ESSENTIALS IN ART

disregard painting love neither philosophy nor nature." In other words: he who would rightly practise painting must understand both philosophy and nature.

The profession of an artist demands the qualifications of true life and knowledge, love, and work.

A good painter according to Leonardo's prescriptions must not only reproduce the outer man, but also the motions of his soul. That figure alone is truly worthy of commendation, that in attitude, gesture, and play of features expresses the passions and emotions of the soul. The outer form is a thing not so hard to reproduce; if a man but persevere, that can he learn by rules and diligent practice; but to reproduce the inner man and his emotions is a thing that demands the utmost from the artist's powers of apprehension, from his life and mode of work. On all these points Leonardo in his treatise on painting has given more definite prescriptions; he has told how the artist must live, when occupied in "subtle speculations," how he should spend his leisure, and in what method he should work, how he should never neglect to observe men in different conditions of life, or to seek the correspondence between the outer appearance and the inner motive. No demand is too great for Leonardo, when it concerns the artist, for his task must finally be to become a conscious representative of the spiritual creative power that manifests in nature by reason of inherent necessity. Fundamentally his work is subject to the same laws as Nature's. His privilege is to see intuitively that which the scientist seeks his way to by study, and demonstrates by experiment. But

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

he can only attain this clearness by keeping his mind pure, his imagination free from disturbing influence and not allowing the desire for money or for other benefits to occupy his thoughts. A constant striving to dive into the essence of things and learn to understand their true nature, is, according to Leonardo, the artist's pathway to perfection ; and to those that revile others, because they work and study the works of God on holy days he says :

" Such fault-finders had best keep silence. For these (studies) are the way in which knowledge may be won of the creator of many wonderful things, it is the way to learn to love this great inventor. Great love in truth is born of a great knowledge of the beloved object, and if thou hast no knowledge of it, then canst thou love it little or not at all. But if thou lovest it for sake of the advantage thou dost expect from it, and not for its highest virtue, then thou dost as a dog does, which wags his tail and full of gladness skips round the one from whom he hopes to get a bone. But if he knew the virtue of the man, he would be even more affectionate, that is to say if he were capable thereof."

All these utterances, that directly aim at the person of the artist, are indeed filled with a deep feeling for art's ethical significance which is dependent on the creative personality. Religion and art were most intimately interwoven in the conceptions of the masters of the Renaissance, for them art was religious through and through, it was the path that led to the divine. Certainly there always remained an essential difference between the apprehension of a principle and its practical application, but it is in any case evident that we must in no wise judge the general religious value of the art of the Renaissance on the ground of its difference from the ideal of the Christian Church. For them (the artists of the

ESSENTIALS IN ART

Renaissance) art itself was holy in proportion as it approached the ideal, and was supported by the effort to reveal the universal laws of harmony.

Both Alberti and Leonardo accept the so-called mathematical theory of beauty, according to which the ideal work of art should be compounded of the most beautiful parts, that can be chosen from different models, and united in a harmonious manner. On this Alberti writes :

" With diligence and perseverance he must strive constantly to learn to know the beautiful, however hard it may be, for beauty is not to be found united in any one body, but portioned out amongst many ; therefore must he use all pains to seek it out and make it his spiritual possession. Certain it is, that he who accustoms himself to undertake things difficult, shall so much the easier accomplish simpler matters, and there are no difficulties that may not be overcome with industry and perseverance. But in order that work and pains may not be cast away, he must avoid the habit of foolish men, who, wholly preoccupied with their own talent, endeavour, without the aid of Nature's models, which they can study with eyes and understanding, alone and wholly through themselves, to make progress in the art of painting. Such as these never learn to paint well, but merely accustom themselves to their own faults. The idea of beauty flies from the inexperienced, and can scarcely be approached by him who is most experienced."

This theory has not infrequently, in times of spiritual drought, served as a pretext for false pretensions ; but the theory is not responsible for that ; rather is it the fault of the artists who make the selection, for there is here much scope for individual taste and judgment. How this idea was applied by Alberti may be seen more in detail in his tract on sculpture (" Della Scultura ").

Alberti sets forth as models for sculptural treatment, partly the human form in general, the ideal

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

figure as representative of the species; and for another part figures more portrait-like with marked features and characteristic attitudes; the former class corresponds to that of the ideal figures of the antique, while the latter marks a step beyond the old bounds towards the individualizing art of the Renaissance. Touching the formal presentation of these two kinds of figures, he says :

"This double aim is met by proportion and definition. The difference between them being, that the proportion reveals and determines for us that which nature has planted unchangeably in every living being, and which is generally apparent in them, as the breadth and thickness of the limbs, while it is definition that gives the accidental variations in the limbs produced by different positions of the parts consequent on motion."

The question then is, how these proportions or measures through which the ideal figure may be represented, can be reached. In what manner should the laws of proportion be established? It is well known that several different answers were already given in antiquity; Polycletus formulated his *canon* or rule of proportion, Lysippus his, Vitruvius his, and so on. They are all constructed on a mathematical basis by means of a unit of measure chosen from the face, the foot, or the hand, which is multiplied a certain number of times in the other limbs and parts of the body. Alberti, however, places the question on a more naturalistic footing. He writes :

"Thus we have selected a large number of human bodies, that according to the judgment of experienced men were considered most beautiful, and have measured their proportions. These we then compared one with another, rejected all that were above or below a certain standard, and kept only the measures that remained as the average deduced from many examples, and noted their common measure or mean."

ESSENTIALS IN ART

The mode of procedure, according to which the average is deduced from examples chosen from a quantity, must necessarily, in the last resort, be dependent on how the examples are chosen; judgment by individual taste comes to play a determining part in the operation. Thus the classic endeavour to find the ideal measure or standard for the proportions of a figure is in Alberti wedded with a good deal of artistic freedom. He speaks as artist and not as philosopher. Intuition takes the lead, where reason can find no path. He is in this regard a characteristic representative of the Renaissance.

No matter how deep was the charm exercised by antique art, no matter how eager was the effort to reach the objective harmony, that was stamped on the character of classic art, and that reflected its ethico-religious import, yet there was no getting free from the emotional personality that Christianity had awakened to consciousness. Man was no longer the kinsman of the Gods, his ideal nature was not harmony, but a compound of good and evil, that must be harmonized by strife and suffering. The Renaissance, as we have shown, sought a reconciliation between the antique and the Christian ideals, it sought it in life and in art, but in that search lay the germ of a deep-seated conflict. The more sincere and deep was the longing for a restoration of the antique life and art, the harder it became to satisfy the Christian yearning for the infinite. In the beginning the opposition was not so great, because, living more upon the surface, men were carried by their enthusiasm safely over many a chasm; but later, especially after the catholic

DURING THE RENAISSANCE

reaction got the upper hand, it became very evident. It brought about a conflict that may be traced in many an artist's work, most evidently in Michel Angelo's. But there are examples of the successful blending of these different ideals into a whole, in which a perfect harmony expresses spiritual values answering as well the Christian as the antique aspirations.

This is particularly true of some of Raphael's compositions, his Florentine Madonnas and earlier Roman frescoes. Here is to be found, independent of motive and figure characterization, an artistic element of unusual spiritual expressiveness. It inheres in the conception itself, it lies in the perfect harmony among all the parts of the composition even to the smallest. The relation of the figures to the landscape is of the greatest importance in this connection. These figures, still dominated by classic measure and proportion, stand out against a background of pure space. The horizon is usually low, the sky is high, transparent, clear. The landscape is no mere map or bird's-eye view with toy-like small details scattered over the surface, as in quattrocento pictures, but space filled with light and atmosphere. The bond of matter, that binds all earlier paintings is sundered. We feel a sense of freedom, of the illimitable; the space widens out into a universe, just as when some melodic motif swells out through orchestration into cosmic beauty.*

The impression such a work of art creates is in

* Cf. B. Berenson's excellent analysis of "Space composition" in Perugino's and Raphael's paintings. "The Central Italian Painters," p. 95.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

the highest sense religious, for it involves a feeling of a something greater and more real than the phenomenal world, something that all religions, and not least of all the Christian, aim at evoking. But of art, even more than of music, it is true, that it is mute and meaningless to him who has no art nor music in his soul.

IV

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE
TO DONATELLO

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE TO DONATELLO

FROM the close of the nineteenth century, historians of art have shown a general tendency to under-estimate the importance of the antique to the art of the Renaissance.

In conformity with the prevailing trend in contemporary art, they have tried to prove that the highest development in the art of the Renaissance was caused rather by the direct study of nature than by adherence to antique precedents. The subject is so extensive, and presents so many different points of view, that arguments may be brought to show the preponderating influence of one or the other sources of inspiration. But if we confine ourselves to the field of sculpture, it cannot be denied that the antique was the foundation on which the artists of the Renaissance built. It was the authority for their formal development, their highest conceptions. It was through the study of the antique that their eyes became open to naturalistic form-values in general, for, we must remember, these artists belonged to a period when nature as a motive of representation had long been forgotten; and it therefore was almost impossible for them to give expression to their naturalistic tendencies in a formal and convincing manner, without the aid of precedents. But their creations were, of course, their own spiritual property, the product of their

ESSENTIALS IN ART

own imagination in a classical form, which also was, more or less, true to nature. In many instances, this reversion to ancient types was occasioned less by any attempt at imitation than by an innate spiritual relationship, a similarity in tendencies and natural inclinations between new masters and old. It was not so much the external forms, but rather the spirit and character, the very life, the feeling and sentiment of the antique, which the sculptors of the Renaissance endeavoured to appropriate. In short, the great sculptors of the Renaissance stand before the antique as real *artists*, and not as imitators. And this is also one of the most essential characteristics which distinguishes the art of the Renaissance from that of the Middle Ages, when the antique had also served to guide the Italian sculptors in regard to form, but in a totally different manner. The mediæval workmen were in no intimate relationship with the men of old ; understanding little or nothing of their character and aims, they simply purloined outward forms, because it was easier than to create forms of their own. Thus their works give eloquent testimony to the impossibility of acquiring the mode of expression of a past epoch, without entering into its life and spirit—in other words, the futility of all attempts at imitation not founded on a natural communion of spirit. They confirm, in a way, the correctness of the traditional, although lately disputed, conception of the Renaissance as a revival of antique art ideals and forms—modified, on account of the great difference in cultural conditions.

The real nature and significance of the spiritual affinity between the sculptors of antiquity and those

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

of the Renaissance, is a matter rather to be felt than to be arrived at by analytical reasoning. It applies to the phase of art work which is not subject to analysis; and it is not always exhibited in obvious formal likeness. The classical trend, the inspiration of the antique, is easily recognized in works of the Renaissance which baffle the search for known definite precedents. This may often be because the latter have been lost, but the reason must oftener be that masters of the Renaissance created independently in the spirit and sentiment of antiquity, but without directly imitating any particular model. Their creative imagination was so thoroughly impregnated with admiration of the antique that it worked, so to speak, only in accordance with that mode. In consequence, it is only in comparatively few instances that this kinship in style can be demonstrated in a perfectly convincing, empirical way; while, on the other hand, to anyone who has investigated the subject ever so little, these instances appear pre-eminently as corroborative of a general tendency, of an essential and fundamental trait in the statuary art of the Renaissance.

If we wished to consider the question *in extenso*, it would therefore be necessary to pass in review a considerable part of Renaissance sculpture, outlining the individual relations of the respective masters to definite classical examples; but special researches have as yet made so little preparation for this task, as difficult as it is fascinating, that it can hardly be undertaken in the immediate future.* As a general

* The question about the importance of the antique to the sculptors of the Renaissance has, of course, been considered by

ESSENTIALS IN ART

rule (not without exceptions, of course), it may be said that the greater and more powerful the creative artists have been, the more boldly and unreservedly have they approached the antique, the more plainly have they felt a spiritual relationship with the old masters, a desire to compete with them in aiming toward similar ideals. For the present, we must confine ourselves to a few observations concerning this relation in the art of the first great sculptor of the Renaissance. They will prove that Donatello was not only the great realist who has won general praise, but an artist of strong classical tendencies as well.

* * * *

Donatello's artistic career was begun when the Gothic tradition still reigned. His earliest known works, the two small prophets on the "Porta della Mandorla" of the Florentine Cathedral (1406), the marble David in the Bargello (1408-10), the St. John the Evangelist in the Duomo, and partly also St. Mark on Or San Michele (1412), are composed according to the Gothic scheme, with uneven distribution of weight, curved folds and lines. Only in the statue of St. George does Donatello first find the new, generally accepted solution of the problem of the statue within a niche (1416).

The St. George has sometimes been designated as the most "classical" example of the Early several authors, but none have, as far as we know, gone into a thorough study of the whole theme; single interesting remarks are to be found in: Müntz, "Histoire de l'Art pendant la Renaissance," I-III; Wickhoff, "Die Antike im Bildungsgange Michel Angelos" in "Mitt. d. Instituts für Oestr. Gesch. Forschung," 1882, I; von Schlosser, "Über einige Antiken Ghibertis," "Jahrb. der kunsthist. Sammlungen d. allerh. Kaiserhauses," Band 24.



Photo Alinari, Florence

FIG. 1. DONATELLO. IL ZUCCONE
(*The Campanile, Florence*)



Photo Anderson, Rome

FIG. 2. ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK
ORIGINAL OF THIRD CENTURY
DEMOSTHENES
(*Vatican, Rome*)

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

Renaissance, which is undoubtedly correct, if the word "classical" does not here imply striking agreement with Greek plastic forms. We discern, on the other hand, the classical tendency to a clear, tectonic construction of the youthful figure, something of the same trend which we find still more pronounced in Polycletus and his immediate successors at the close of the fifth century B.C. It is true that later on Donatello produced statues with much more highly developed space-values, freer movement, bolder and more realistic characterization, and better general effect, but he has hardly created one which presents a more exemplary solution of the problems underlying all statuary art. The classical instinct (if the expression be permissible) has prompted the young artist to a creation which seems influenced by antique principles, although he could have had as yet but very little opportunity for a close study of ancient sculpture.*

In his subsequent great works, the statues on the Campanile, Donatello discloses other features of his art; the realistic characterization, the broad, almost impressionistic manner of treatment. Before such works as Jeremiah and "il Zuccone" (Fig. 1) several critics have been reminded of the portraits of homely old age by Frans Hals, which vibrate with life. The technique becomes, sometimes, that of a painter, the marble has occasionally been worked into abrupt planes of light and shadow, which may give an impression of dashes of paint. In the strong

* Vasari's story about Donatello's visit to Rome in his youth, in company with Brunelleschi, has been rejected by later authors and is at least entirely unproved.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

nervous tension, the facial expressions of the old men become a grimace, the movements may become cramped, and yet even here a plastic clearness and greatness remind us of antique sculpture. This "Zuccone" is draped like a Greek orator in a himation, gathered over one shoulder and falling obliquely in long wide folds down to the ground. It is the same effective mode of draping which we find in many antique statues of orators, but applied with greater boldness and kept together better than ever before. The famous statue of Demosthenes, in the Vatican (Fig. 2), may serve as a good example for comparison. It is doubtful whether there is any ancient statue with such monumental drapery as falls from the raised shoulder of "il Zuccone." This aim at synthetizing the plastic effect through the draping is a further development on classical precedents but, in this case, allied to a somewhat impressionistic treatment.

In a statue of about the same time—the so-called Poggio Bracciolini in the Duomo in Florence (Fig. 3)—of technique similar to that of "il Zuccone," the head shows such affinity to Roman portrait busts, that one is inevitably forced to think Donatello had an opportunity of studying such examples of ancient art. A particularly characteristic specimen of these boldly naturalistic busts is to be found in the Vatican Museum (Fig. 4). Donatello is, by the way, the first sculptor to re-establish portrait sculpture in the position it had occupied in the days of Greece and Rome. Before him nobody had ventured to execute real, naturalistic portraits, busts cut off at chest level. In them his own extraordinary faculty



Photo Altinari

FIG. 3. DONATELLO
"POGGIO BRACCIOLENI"
(*Plomosa, Florence*)



Photo Altinari

FIG. 4. EARLY ROMAN
BUST OF AN OLD MAN
(*L'atikan, Rome*)



Photo Altinari

FIG. 5. DONATELLO. ANTONIO
DEI NARNI
(*Bargello, Florence*)



Photo Altinari

FIG. 6. COPY AFTER POLYCLETUS¹
DORYPHOROS
(*Museum, Naples*)



IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

of psychological characterization was, of course, of the greatest aid to him, but he surely learned the principles of composition from the Roman examples.

Of his two undisputed busts, one, at least—the so-called Antonio dei Narni, in the Bargello (Fig. 5)—is conventionalized in classical style, with the bare chest adorned with an antique cameo. It must indeed be admitted that the phsycological feeling in this bronze bust is not strikingly classical, for it possesses more intimacy and individuality than we could discover in any Greek or Roman bust, yet the unusually clear and broad formal conception carries our thoughts towards the art of Argos of the close of the fifth century B.C. As an example of this art, we may recall the herm-bust of the Doryphorus of Polycletus (Fig. 6), at Naples, very likely a true copy of the work of the great master of Argos executed, according to the inscription by Apollonius, of Athens in the first century B.C.

It is uncertain whether Donatello had occasion to visit Rome, the centre of classical sculpture in Italy, before the year 1432, when he was already a middle-aged man, but, on the other hand, we know for certain that he had excellent opportunities in Florence to study antique works of art in the collection of Cosimo de' Medici. According to Vasari, he also restored antique statues for this Mæcenas (among others a Marsyas, now to be seen in the Uffizi), and was his expert art-adviser in the purchase of important works of sculpture, cameos, and medals. Such commissions naturally contributed to enhance greatly Donatello's interest in and to

ESSENTIALS IN ART

broaden his conception of the antique. The collections of the Medici became gradually, as we know, the centre of all classical art education in Florence thanks to the zeal and interest of Cosimo, Piero, and Lorenzo. After the death of Donatello, the collection had as its curator his pupil Bertoldo, whose classical predilections were even more direct than Donatello's. Here, in this collection under Bertoldo's guidance, worked a majority of the Florentine youths who, during the latter part of the fifteenth century, developed into artists, and among them Michel Angelo. That this collection contained also Roman busts may be safely assumed, even though its chief treasures are believed to have been in the department of minor decorative statuettes, reliefs, medals, and cameos. It is very likely that some of those direct imitations of Roman statues which we meet among the large number of small Italian bronze statuettes of the fifteenth century were done by artists who had had the opportunity of studying the Medici collection.

Of the cameos, Donatello has reproduced several, among them one of considerable beauty in the medallion which Antonio dei Narni wears representing Amor as a charioteer. Another antique medallion is suspended from the neck of Holofernes in the Judith group. Still another is to be seen in the helmet of the Goliath beneath the foot of the victorious David. Mention should also be made of the so-called "Patera Martelli," the cover of a bronze mirror, decorated with half-length figures of a satyr and a bacchante, surrounded by bacchanalian emblems borrowed from cameos and reliefs in the



FIG. 7. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP. ODYSSEUS AND ATHENA
(Courtyard of the Palazzo Medici, Florence)

Photo Amari, Firenze

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

Medici collection. Of greater importance, however, are the eight large medallions executed in Donatello's studio by his pupils (Maso di Bartolommeo and Bertoldo?) for the spandrels in the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici (Fig. 7). The motives of seven of these are said to have been gathered from cameos in the collection of Cosimo de' Medici (most of them now in the Museum at Naples), and that for the eighth from a sarcophagus, then situated outside the Baptistry, but now in the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi.* The compositions are copied with uncommon exactness, and for that reason they do not tell us much about the artist's individual conception of the antique, but it is of the greatest interest to realize that the relief technique here imitates that in cameos, which are always worked in thin layers, often of various colours. It is the more important to know the origin of this particular technique, because Donatello applies it to a large number of his late reliefs, particularly the great narrative bronze reliefs in S. Antonio at Padua.

But the master himself rarely adheres to his originals as faithfully as the pupils did in chiselling these medallions. They are the works of copyists rather than of a great creator. A peculiar instance of casual misconception and confusion of motives borrowed from the antique is presented by the bronze statue which is known as "Amor" in the National Museum of Florence (Fig. 8). Vasari, who saw this statue at Agnolo Doni's in Florence, calls it

* Cf. Aldo Foratti, "I. Tondi nel cortile del Palazzo Riccardi a Firenze. L'Arte," 1917, I. The author distinguishes two different pupils as the makers of the medallions and reproduces some antique cameos that may have served as models.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

"Mercury" (probably on account of the winged feet), and writes about it the significant sentence, "*tutto tondo e vestito in un certo modo bizzarro.*" The explanation most generally accepted nowadays is that the statue is meant to represent a combination of Amor and Attis.* This opinion is principally founded on a statuette in the Louvre representing Attis (that mystic deity whose cult was mainly based upon the seasonal changes of nature) as a dancing eunuch, with opened Asiatic trousers. This combination, however, explains nothing in Donatello's statue but the bizarre dress, and it must be noted, besides, that the statuette in the Louvre shows forms of feminine softness, which bear not the slightest resemblance to those of Donatello's frisky putto. Elsewhere Attis is usually represented as a shepherd. The reasons for accepting the Amor-Attis combination are, therefore, extremely weak; nor do they explain the serpent under the boys' feet. Might not this be interpreted as an indication that a diminutive "Hercules" battling with the serpents was among Donatello's models in this instance? The raised hands may be supposed to have held serpents, as is often the case in representations of the young Hercules, such as are found in the Museums of Florence and Naples. Yet it is evident that other mythological elements also entered into Donatello's conception. This radiantly happy boy, dancing and laughing with contagious exuberance, is closely related to the representations of Eros in classical art, a fact made further evident by the little

* Cf. A. G. Meyer, "Donatello" (Künstlermonographien LXV) p. 78.



Photo Alinari

FIG. 8. DONATELLO
"AMOR"
(Bargello, Florence)



FIG. 9. GREEK SECOND CEN-
TURY AMOR-HERCULES
(Museum, Boston)



FIG. 10. DONATELLO
"AMORINO"
(Formerly Beckerath Coll., Berlin)



Photo Alinari

FIG. 11. POMPEIIAN
"PUTTO" WITH A DOLPHIN
(Museum, Naples)

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

wings on the shoulder. The two classical figures which are echoed in Donatello's dancing bronze boy are not seldom found combined in late Hellenistic and Roman works of sculpture; Amor was represented with the attributes of the young Hercules, the lion's skin and the serpents, but was allowed at the same time to retain his own little divine wings, his jolly countenance, and his roguish smile. The inner meaning of such representations seems to have been not only the symbolical melting together of Love and Strength, but also—when Amor tramples the serpent under foot—an expression of Love's victory over Wisdom, inasmuch as the serpent has been the symbol of wisdom from time immemorial. Instances of such combined representations of Amor-Hercules are cited by Clarac (*"Musée,"* pls. 647 and 1480) and in Benndorf's work on the Lateran Museum (No. 497), and there is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston a terra-cotta statuette of the same subject, which, together with several others, comes from the cemetery at Myrina (near Smyrna) and is ascribed by archæologists to the beginning of the second century before Christ (Fig. 9).

It represents Amor as a chubby youngster in a semi-dancing pose, with his right hand resting on the hip and the left a little extended. The face, framed in curls, is lighted up by a happy smile. From the shoulders little wings protrude, but back and head are covered with the lion's skin of Hercules, which, by the way, is fastened to the lower limbs by cords. Around the left leg and foot something is wound which resembles a serpent, but probably is meant to be the lion's tail. This oddly dressed

ESSENTIALS IN ART

putto has, on the whole, a striking relationship to Donatello's boy, and may for that reason, and in spite of certain differences like the absence of the strange trousers, tend to throw light on the association of ideas from which Donatello's "Amor-Hercules" has sprung. A bronze statuette of the young Dionysus from the first century A.D., in the Morgan collection, may be mentioned as serving the same purpose of illustrating the Græco-Roman derivation of the Donatello "Amor-Hercules," although the Boston terra-cotta is more closely related to it. Donatello's conception, of course, has strong personal traits, but it is founded upon classical motives, and it is not impossible that he may actually have found the classical elements combined in the same way as in his bronze statue.

A somewhat similar work from the studio of Donatello, if not by himself, should be mentioned in this connection because of its likeness to the Amor-Hercules of the Bargello and to certain antique putti or amorini (Fig. 10). It offers additional proof of Donatello's dependence on classic models and tends to support our opinion as to the antique inspiration of the Amor-Hercules. The statue we are thinking of is carved in wood (75 cm. high) and belonged to the Beckerath collection in Berlin; its present whereabouts are unknown. According to the catalogue of the Beckerath sale (May 1916) it represents one of a pair of angels that served as garland-bearers on the top of some large tabernacle, an interpretation which seems plausible from the posture of the figure and particularly of the raised right hand that evidently carried some object, possibly a garland.

106

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

Taken as a whole, however, the statue has not much likeness to traditional presentations of Christian angels; it is a robust boy with very large head and sturdy limbs, who in spite of small wings on his shoulders, has a more Herculean than angelic appearance. Similar naked boys are by no means uncommon among late Greek or Roman representations of amorini or putti. As a good example of such statues may be quoted a bronze putto from Pompeii, now in the museum at Naples, who is carrying a dolphin on his shoulders. The correspondence between this figure and Donatello's angel is evident enough from our illustrations; they may almost be called children of the same family in spite of the differences in their postures and the fact that they are executed in quite different materials. Some antique putto figure similar to the Pompeian bronze must have been known to Donatello, and it has evidently made a much deeper impression on him than any representations of Christian angels. None of the other Renaissance sculptors of Donatello's time has represented putti so thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of the late antique (Fig. 11).

As one more example of Donatello's close adherence to the gay and sturdy putto type illustrated by the Amor-Hercules and the putto with the dolphin in Naples, I should mention the beautiful bronze bust of a laughing Amor which some years ago passed from the collection of the Duke of Westminster into that of Mr. Widener in Philadelphia. This Amor is a younger brother of the dancing one in the Museo Nazionale although his joy is not quite

ESSENTIALS IN ART

so exuberant. Both these bronze works are very characteristic examples of Donatello's far-famed putti, chief motives in so many of his works, especially on the pulpit at Prato and on the choir-loft of the Duomo in Florence.

These great decorative compositions bear remarkable witness to Donatello's debt to ancient sculpture. Executed shortly after his return from Rome, in 1434, they clearly show, both in their architectonic construction and decoration and in their human motives, the deep impress of Roman examples. A detailed analysis of the decorative motives would in this connection carry us too far. It is enough to recall the ever-recurring acanthus leaves, shells, amphoras, dolphins, garlands, festoons, and other antique motives, and that only through Donatello did they win full recognition in Renaissance sculpture. Donatello uses garlands and putti very much as they are used on Roman sarcophagi (the boys supporting the festoons, as for instance on the tabernacles in Sta. Croce and on Or San Michele, should be compared with the garland-bearers on a Roman sarcophagus in the Metropolitan Museum). But at the same time, he has introduced on the choir-loft of the Duomo (Fig. 12) a mediæval decorative motive, the so-called Cosmati work, a species of coloured glass mosaic which covers the entire background as well as the columns, making them gleam with gold and rich colours as do many monuments in the mediæval Roman basilicas.

The figure motive in all these compositions is the classical putto or *amorino*, developed chiefly by, late Greek (Hellenistic) and Roman art. On



Procuratoria, Florence

FIG. 12. DONATELLO, "BOIR-LOOT"
(From the *Procuratoria, Florence*)



FIG. 13. ROMAN SARCHIOPHAGUS
(Uffizi, Florence)

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

numerous Roman sarcophagi we find these genii and *amorini*, either mourning at the bier of the deceased, or playing and frolics at love feasts and banquets. At times they form the sole decoration. An excellent example of this is found on a sarcophagus at Florence the whole front of which is filled with *amorini* engaged in the ordinary athletic games, boxing, wrestling, etc. while others place wreaths on their brows, or blow horns to herald the glory of the victors (see Fig. 13). Judging from the place where this very sarcophagus now is, it is not impossible that Donatello may have seen it and found in it the best basis for his own conception of the putto as a sturdy, happy, somewhat wild boy of three to five years old. Of special interest is a small bronze relief by Donatello, in Berlin, with practically the same subject as the above-mentioned sarcophagus, putti playing, fighting, and carrying away the defeated. On the choir-loft of the cathedral, as also on the pulpit at Prato, Donatello's putti show still more animation. They are singing, dancing, and making wondrous merry. With bright, sunny smiles, they whirl as exultantly as a spring torrent, back and forth along the entire gallery, dancing in the gleam of the mosaic background. We see the figures through openings indicated by columns, and altogether unhampered by any limiting walls, bathed, as it were, in air and light. The space problem is here solved in a manner hardly surpassed in later relief compositions.

The playing and singing putti, composed and partly executed by Donatello for the main altar of S. Antonio in Padua, have been compared with their antique associates on the marble urn containing the ashes of

ESSENTIALS IN ART

Lucilius Felix in the Capitoline Museum.* The resemblances are so striking that one cannot help supposing that the sculptor saw this urn during his stay at Rome and that it was one of the models which prompted him to use putti as the chief motive in the pulpit and the choir-loft. In any event, it is plain that Donatello, after his Roman sojourn, began making use of the putti to a greater extent than before, and that he therefore received the real impulse for this classical motive from the art treasures of the eternal city.

Also in the Annunciation tabernacle in Sta. Croce (Fig. 14), usually attributed to the late twenties, but which, in my opinion, cannot have been executed until after the return from Rome (1434), Donatello has introduced chubby, laughing putti, serving as garland-bearers on the gable. The erroneous date may have been suggested, in a way, by Vasari, who mentions the Annunciation among Donatello's earliest works, and bestows well-deserved praise on its psychological expression no less than on its formal beauty.† Among other things Vasari points out the uncommonly beautiful delineation of the figures of the Virgin and the Angel, and the skill of the artist in making the bodies felt under the draperies, "wherein was evidenced his endeavour to revive the beauty of antique art, which had been forgotten for such a long time," as Vasari expresses it. Surely, no one can refuse to see the classical impress upon this work, in the noble types and the gentle dignity of action

* Cf. Semrau, "Donatellos Kanzeln in San Lorenzo," and Venturi, "Storia dell' Arte Italiana," Vol. VI.

† The early date is accepted by Bode, Schmarsow, and others. The later date by Tschudi, Schottmüller, Schubring, and others.



Photo Attuari, Florence

FIG. 14. DONATELLO. ANNUNCIATION
(Sta. Croce, Florence)



IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

in both figures, as well as in the splendid execution to which Vasari calls attention. The sweet, natural dignity of the Virgin, recovering from the first shock of the intrusion and greeting of the heavenly messenger; the profound but reserved pathos in the strong, winged youth who is delivering the mystic message, have hardly been surpassed in any representation of the Annunciation. Here an inner vision of the scene receives its classically pure and clear interpretation.

The tabernacle is of a peculiarly bizarre character; it is, as Vasari says very appropriately, decorated "*alla grotesca*." The artist's eagerness to produce something as thoroughly "*all'antica*" as possible, is evidently responsible for the poor taste of this mixture of decorative features borrowed from various monuments. The most absurd elements are probably the concave frieze serving as pedestal, the oblique shields, "scale-covered" pilasters, mask capitals, high entablature, and the heavy, broad gable; the last is, however, relieved by garland-bearing putti. In all probability Donatello was convinced that in this half absurd and exaggerated decorative ensemble he had produced a work in the antique manner.

In comparing the figures of this tabernacle with classical works, we are reminded of the numerous reliefs on Greek tombs, in which two figures modelled in very high relief are placed face to face within a niche.

The most beautiful example of such a Greek *stèle* is undoubtedly the well-known monument of Hegeso at Hagia Triada outside Athens, a work of the Golden Age and often connected with the art of Phidias.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

The subject presents a woman of rank taking some object (jewels?) from a box held before her by a young woman attendant. Taking into consideration the difference in artistic quality and conception, a comparison of this *stele* with Donatello's Annunciation discloses a similarity in the types—beautifully rounded, straight-featured faces with high foreheads framed in wavy tresses—and in the endeavour to give a full realization of the bodies under the draperies, it is not unreasonable to think that Donatello may have had an opportunity to see a Greek work with a more or less similar composition, and figures which, if not so fine, still possessed something of the great classical period; that he borrowed the types and the essential features of the composition but infused a warmer life and more animation in the figures than are ever found in classic examples.

The Greek impress is still more noticeable in the bronze David (Fig. 15), because the figure is altogether nude. This is an historic landmark, for not only is it the first entirely nude large figure of a youth in Renaissance sculpture and the only example by Donatello, but it is also the only statue by the master composed not strictly for the front view only, but in the round.

In my judgment this David cannot have been executed until after Donatello's visit to Rome, in 1432-34.* As a conception of a traditional and quite common motive, it is extraordinary. Were there no attributes, nobody would ever suppose it to represent

* It is usually dated to the end of the twenties (ca 1427-30); the only author who gives a later date is W. Pastor in his monograph on Donatello.



Photo Brugi, Florence
FIG. 15. DONATELLO
BRONZE DAVID
(Bargello, Florence)



Photo Bruckmann, Munich
FIG. 16. GREEK, FOURTH
CENTURY HERMES
(Palazzo Vecchio, Florence)



FIG. 17. *a. & b.* PRAXITELIAN EROS FROM NICOPOLIS
(Museum, Constantinople)



IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

the young shepherd of the Bible. A glance at Donatello's earlier figures of David in Florence (in the Museo Nazionale and in the Palazzo Martelli) convinces us that the artist has not conceived this later bronze as an illustration of the Davidic motive, but as a classical nude, quite incidentally vested with the sword (not with the sling) and the head of Goliath.

The youth is standing in a meditative pose, with head bending low, as if in a dreamy mood; the regular features are shaded by the wide-brimmed hat. Because the weight of the body is thrown on the right leg, the left knee being bent as the foot rests on the giant's head; the upper part of the figure assumes the silhouette of a soft S-line, which is further emphasized by the pose of the left hand (resting high upon the side) and by the resultant elevation of the left shoulder. In spite of the easy, quiet pose, one notices a certain constraint in the contour, a certain lack in the form, a synthetic trait, which in itself gives us reason to assume that the artist did not work from a living model. This peculiar interpretation of the form reveals already an echo of the antique, an endeavour to achieve something in the same spirit that we find in classic statues of the fourth century B.C.

Two antique figure motives, in particular, seem to reverberate as an undertone in this peculiar conception of David: *Hermes* and *Eros*—especially if we think of *Hermes* as the guide of the souls in the underworld, often represented as a dreamy, downward-gazing youth (closely connected with the traditional conception of Antinous), as for instance in the well-known "*Hermes of Andros*," a statue

ESSENTIALS IN ART

with several replicas, the best known of which is in the Vatican, where (on account of the characteristics alluded to already) it used to be called "L'Antinoo di Belvedere." The original of this late Greek statue is reputed to have been the work of a master closely related to Praxiteles, and, judging from the number of existing replicas, it must have been a very famous creation.

Among the replicas, we may in this connection recall one which now adorns the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence (Fig. 16); a beautiful Greek torso, with restored arms, legs, and drapery. Neither is the head the original one, although it is Greek and even older than the rest of the statue, for its severe, regular type belongs to the fifth century B.C. According to the information we have obtained concerning the history of the statue, it formed part of the Medici collection in Rome, but was transferred to Florence in 1787, when it was placed, together with some other decorative pieces, in the "Sala del Cinquecento" of the Palazzo Vecchio. This does not preclude the possibility of Donatello's having seen this statue. Its points of likeness to Donatello's bronze David are remarkable; they appear not only in the uneven distribution of weight and the consequent S-curve of the body and legs, but also in the type (with the strong nose and the straight eyebrows) and the headgear. Donatello's David has a Mercury helmet similar to that of this Greek Hermes. The only difference of any importance is that the Hermes lacks the high support under his left foot.

There are other classical figures of the same type, which show a pose similar to that of Donatello's

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

David, but sometimes with a right and left reversal. Among these the Eros figures of Praxiteles of the type which is best known through the so-called "Genio di Vaticano" deserve special attention (see Fig. 17). The original perfect specimen was probably the Praxitelean Eros (of Thespiae?) known through several replicas, one in Naples, another in Constantinople which show us the young god standing with head inclined forward and eyes cast downward, and with the weight of his body supported by the left leg. The lines of the figure almost recall Gothic creations; they have the soft rhythm of Donatello's earlier marble David.*

Instances could be multiplied, but it is hardly worth while, since we shall not be able to determine with certainty which particular work may have been directly studied by Donatello. It is not so much a single specimen, as the entire group of these dreamy Praxitelean youths, which engages our interest, and we must confine ourselves to the confident assertion that Donatello probably took his model from the group. At the same time it is evident that the soft and elegant original form has become somewhat spare and rigid in Donatello's hands, the contour more strictly defined, the movement stiffer. In the bronze David the inspiration derived from classical examples merges with the feeling of the young, awakening Renaissance for clear-cut forms.

Less felicitous as an individual creation though hardly less interesting as an example of Donatello's

* Cf. an article by Dr. A. Hahr in "Monatshfte für Kunstwissenschaft," 1912, reviewing my Swedish book, "Studier i Florentinsk Renässansplastik."

ESSENTIALS IN ART

dependence on antique models is the large David statue, which used to stand in the Martelli palace in Florence—where it was seen by Vasari and a number of more recent art-historians—but has lately passed into the Widener collection at Philadelphia, (Fig. 18). This marble statue has by most authorities been dated shortly after the bronze David, a supposition which, however, it is difficult to support by analysis of style or a comparison between the two figures. They are widely different both in conception and execution, and as the marble statue furthermore is left incomplete, it offers no safe clue for a definite dating. Generally speaking, however, it shows more similarity with the statues on the Campanile than with the bronze David and may therefore have been executed rather before than after the bronze statue.

David is here represented as the young shepherd boy with his traditional attribute, the sling, hanging from his right hand, and the left foot resting on Goliath's head. He wears a short chiton which is girdled above the hips and kept together with a band that goes diagonally over the breast. The right leg is covered with tight trousers, split on the knee, but the left is bare, which may be a consequence of the unfinished state of the sculpture. The socks on the feet are also only slightly indicated but they are evidently of the same kind as the footgear in the Artemis statues of antiquity.

Modern authors mostly speak about this statue in a tone of regret or disappointment, reflecting what they think that Donatello himself must have felt before a misshapen work which he left unfinished. Some critics even prefer not to blame Donatello for



Photo Alinari Florence
 FIG. 18. DONATELLO
 MARBLE DAVID
(Widener Coll., Philadelphia, Penn)



FIG. 19. DONATELLO
 SKETCH FOR A DAVID STATUE
(Museum, Berlin)



IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

the evident shortcomings in the execution but some pupil of his who may have assisted the master in the chiselling of the statue. Nobody could help noticing the lack of individual character and expression in this rather slack and feminine shepherd boy.

The awkwardness of this figure becomes particularly evident if we compare it with the small bronze statue in the Berlin museum which is supposed to be a cast of Donatello's original sketch for the Martelli David (Fig. 19). The formal motive is essentially the same in the small figure as in the large but the contraposto movement is much more accentuated ; the vehement turning in the hips and in the neck gives to the small bronze an appearance of youthful energy and alertness which are entirely lacking in the marble statue. This bronze is as a matter of fact an excellent study of the young victorious David, somewhat akin to Verrocchio's supple and agile youth, while the characterization of the marble youth is remarkably indifferent. Some critics have tried to explain the inferiority of the large figure by the fact that it has been left unfinished in consequence of some mistakes in the execution : too much marble having been chipped away particularly on the left side ; and others maintain that Donatello executed the small statue at a later date than the large one, more or less as an improved edition of the same conception.

We do not wish to enter here upon a discussion about how far Donatello himself was responsible for the inequalities of the marble statue ; the work must anyhow have been chiselled in his studio under his immediate supervision ; neither do we find it necessary to look upon the small bronze as a later product.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

The differences between the small and the large statue are best explained by the fact that the latter was executed under the predominating influence of antique sculpture while the small was a free and spontaneous interpretation of the David motive. If this was the original sketch of the sculptor, as seems most probable, then he must indeed have felt a very strong influence from other sources which made him modify the original figure in a way that did not correspond with the import of the motive. We shall hardly be mistaken if we suppose that this influence was represented by some Greek Artemis statue of the fourth century or by a copy after such a figure. This seems to be indicated by several characteristics of the Martelli David.

In the first place we notice the general feminine character of the figure. The upper part of the body especially appears to be that of a girl rather than a boy. The head with the regular and unindividualized features is a characteristic Greek type of the Praxitelean period. The treatment of the soft rich hair which is kept together with a ribbon accentuates the classic character and adds to the impression of a female head. The costume is also pre-eminently antique, with the exception of the split trousers; it is the same short girdled chiton and hunter's boots that we find in a number of antique Artemis statues. Particularly noticeable in this respect is the band that goes diagonally across the breast; in the Artemis statues it serves to support the quiver of the goddess; Donatello hangs on it the bag of the shepherd boy. But whatever modifications Donatello has introduced in certain details, he has hardly taken much

118

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

pains to conceal the fact that he chiselled the David after the model of a Greek Artemis.*

To state exactly which statue the Florentine sculptor may have had before his eyes, or in his mind, when working on the marble David, is hardly possible, as we do not possess sufficient knowledge of the antiques available in Florence and Rome at the time of Donatello. To judge from the general stylistic character of Donatello's work the model seems, however, to have been a work of the Praxitelean school. It may have been one of those Amazone-like Artemis figures which were created by Strongylion and Praxiteles on the basis of Polycletus' famous Amazon, and which have come down to us in a number of later copies. (Cf. Clarac, p. 580, nr. 1237, B. and p. 576, nr. 1240, and nr. 2026, A.) In these statues the goddess always wears the short girdled chiton and hunter's boots; her hair is made up in a knot at the neck. Her occupation as a huntress is sometimes emphasized by attributes such as the bow and a dog or a stag; sometimes she carries torches as well to light her path. Donatello may not have seen a complete figure of this type but he has certainly seen a torso that has served as model for the body of David.

Among the Amazone-like Artemis statues we have selected as material for comparison one which is to be found in the garden of the Palazzo Corsini al Prato in Florence (Fig. 20), though we are not able to tell whether it existed in Florence at the time of Donatello. It is a Roman work copied after a late fifth-century

* The similarity between Donatello's marble David and classic Artemis statues was first pointed out in a personal conversation by Professor Frederik Poulsen of Copenhagen.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

Greek original ; the arms being added later and the head transferred from some other later statue. The main part of the figure, however, the torso and the legs, correspond rather closely to Donatello's David. The costume is practically the same and the position is only slightly changed. In addition to this Artemis we reproduce another statue from the same garden (both published in Arndt-Amelung, "*Einzelaufnahmen*"), which by some archæologists has been explained as a female figure (Artemis ?), by others as a young Dionysus. Whatever the right name may be, the figure shows rather female forms and a costume of the same type as the Artemis statue. The head, which does not belong to the body, is evidently female and represents a Greek type of the early fifth century ; its general likeness to the head of Donatello's David is close enough to allow the inference that such may have been the model that Donatello had occasion to study (Fig. 21).

Our illustrations should, however, simply be taken as indications of certain types of figures which Donatello probably knew through one or more examples. He was never a slavish copyist, but he often sought his inspiration in the antique, and in this particular case, when he chiselled the Martelli David, he seems to have followed the classic model closer than ever. His admiration made him rather indifferent to the fact that the model represented a woman and not a boy, the result being that he created a figure whose sex and character are left undecided, if not inconsistent with import of the Biblical motive.

As the years pass, Donatello's faculty of realistic characterization gradually increases. His expression

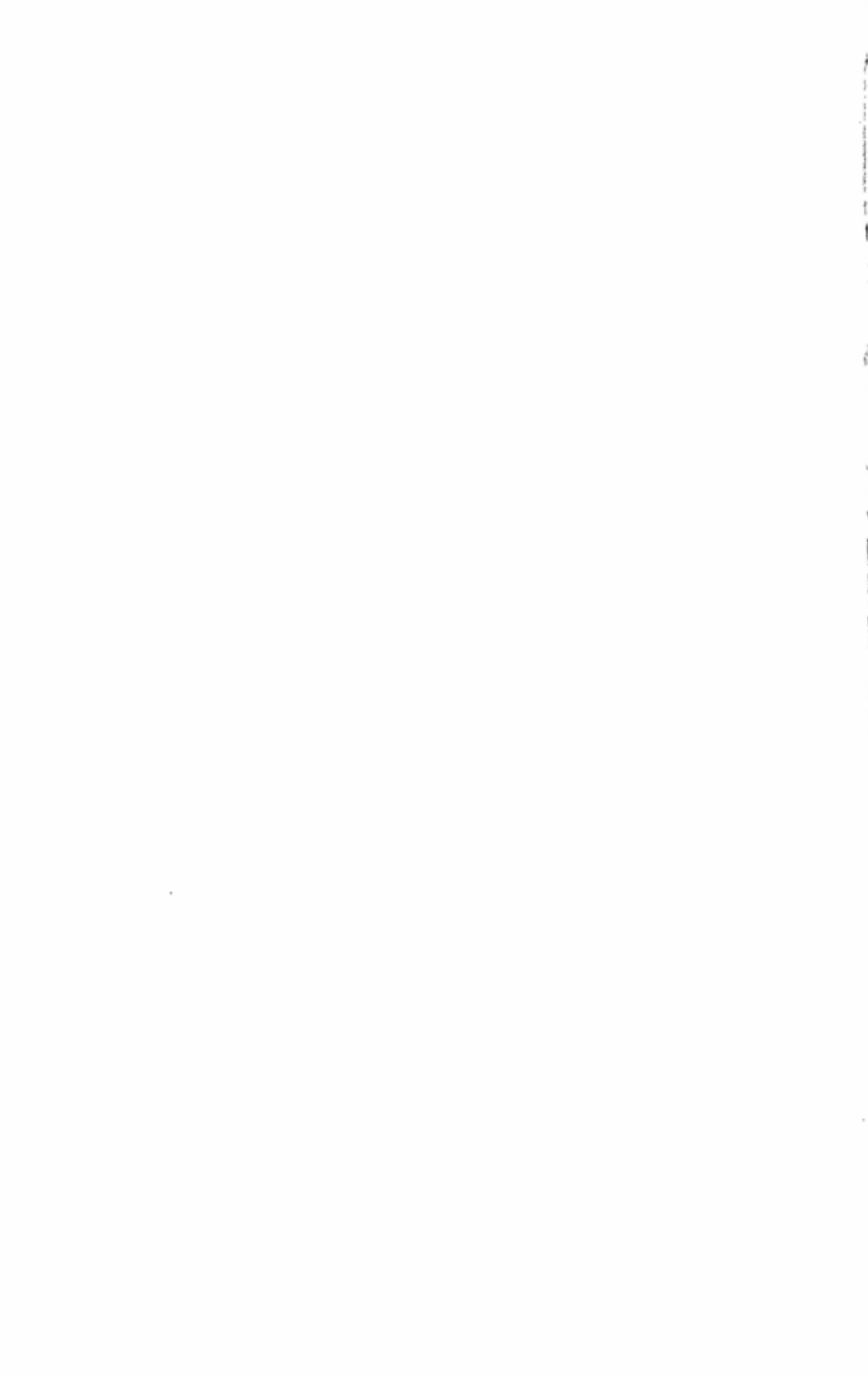
120



Photo Bruckmann, Munich
 FIG. 20. ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK
 ORIGINAL OF THE FOURTH CEN-
 TURY. ARTEMIS
(Palazzo Corsini, Florence)



Photo Bruckmann, Munich
 FIG. 21. ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK
 ORIGINAL OF THE FOURTH CEN-
 TURY. ARTEMIS OR DIONYSUS
(Palazzo Corsini, Florence)



IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

assumes stronger emphasis and accent. He tries more eagerly to set forth momentary life in creations that retain something of the crispness and arbitrariness of improvisation. And with all this is combined a growing fondness for bronze as his working material; probably because it preserves better than marble the freshness of the clay model and makes possible a more rapid, more improvised manner of working, especially when the artist does not himself attend to the casting and chiselling. It is the more remarkable that we should meet with unmistakable antique reminiscences among these later works in bronze. For instance, it has been said that the almost repulsively naturalistic Judith, chopping away at the neck of Holofernes with a big butcher's knife, is a free reproduction of the Mourning Germania (or Thusnelda, as that statue is also called), which is, at present, set up quite near the Judith in the Loggia dei Lanzi.* The type is the same, and the close, nervous treatment of the folds reveals many similarities, although Donatello has translated into bronze the more ornate technique of the Roman marble. Holofernes seems to have been composed from Roman representations of barbarian chieftains. The decorative figures of the three-sided pedestal are no less classical; naked putti, playing in bacchanalian gaiety, harvesting, pressing and tasting the wine—a sort of paraphrase of the drunkenness of Holofernes.

Another great female bronze figure of Donatello's later years, which in style and conception bespeaks a classical spirit throughout, is the stately Madonna on the high altar in S. Antonio at Padua (Fig. 22).

* Cf. Müntz, "Donatello."

ESSENTIALS IN ART

She is plainly related to Greek bronzes of the transition period, a style represented in a somewhat schematized Roman translation by the so-called "Dancers of Herculaneum" (Fig. 23). A better impression of the noble beauty of this style is conveyed by the bronze bust of a youth with the prize cincture around the chest in the Glyptothek in Munich. This Greek original, which stands very close to the youthful figures of Polycletus, exhibits in its severe type a remarkable likeness to Donatello's Paduan Madonna. Compare also the bust of the Polycletan Amazon in Naples.

The culmination of all Donatello's artistic activities, and at the same time the most exquisite testimonial to his relationship to the masters of the Golden Age of Greece, is presented in the magnificent equestrian monument of Gattamelata in Padua (Figs. 24, 25). It is an admitted fact that in a larger measure than other works, the equestrian statue is apt to be conceived and built upon antique precedents. The problem it presents requires a monumental gravity to be solved rightly, the plastic domination of a colossal mass, such as only the ancients have fully comprehended. We may add that no equestrian statue of modern times has been conceived in such a purely classical spirit as Donatello's Gattamelata—no matter how much more conscientiously many later sculptors have endeavoured to imitate antique precedents.

Gattamelata, the proud Venetian general, is shown in his military glory, with spurs, sword, and commander's baton, yet without helmet. He does not give us the impression of being in action, at war,



Photo Altinari

FIG. 22. DONATELLO. BRONZE
MADONNA
(S. Antonio, Padua)



FIG. 23. ROMAN COPY AFTER GREEK
ORIGINAL OF THE FIFTH
CENTURY. A DANCER
(Museum, Naples)

IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

but rather of riding in triumph to receive the laurel of immortal glory. This conception is very much like that of certain ancient equestrian statues, for instance, the bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitol, and the marble statue of M. Nonius Balbus in the museum at Naples. Donatello can hardly have avoided thinking of the Marcus Aurelius when he conceived his bronze horseman, but it was only as a guide in matters of principle, not as an influence in the plastic execution. The bare-legged, bare-headed emperor, in a loose-fitting toga, who is sitting rather stiffly on his weak-legged horse, is quite big in relation to the animal that carries him, and the compositional relation between the two is rather weak. It is clear that the Roman artist has not aimed at any searching characterization; and that he was more influenced by tradition than by study from life or by an individual conception of monumental effect. Donatello in every respect surpasses him.

Although the rider is remarkably small in comparison with the long and stout horse, he controls and dominates the latter, an illusive effect depending chiefly on the fact that the artist's treatment of him is marked by carefully defined details, while the horse is broadly modelled. We have here a strongly individualized portrait of Gattamelata, his arms and armour are copied from those he actually wore. It would take too long to go over every point, but we must call attention to the characterization of the face as testifying to the superb manner in which the familiar features of a recently deceased military commander are expressed in the grand manner and

ESSENTIALS IN ART

with monumental effect. Without exaggeration, without any of the affectation which Verrocchio has displayed in his characterization of Colleoni, Donatello has deepened and intensified the expression into something of the heroic composure of an Olympian. The firmly closed mouth testifies to concentration of will-power, the high forehead appears to harbour great projects, the large eyes look out with deliberating scrutiny ; all the features are harmonized into a purely epic effect. The countenance possesses that lofty dignity, that interior composure and outward broadness, which mark the greatest of Greek statues of the fifth century. This face reminds us again of the Polycletan type, known mainly through the "Doryphorus," although the features are expressive of an entirely different individual spirit.

The models for the horse are supposed to be the Greek bronze horses which adorn the façade of S. Mark's Cathedral in Venice. But it is beyond any doubt that Donatello has made some studies from nature even here. He has characterized his ponderous animal in a manner so clear and so specific, that it has been possible to determine without difficulty its resemblance to a particular breed of Lombardy.

The whole imposing equestrian monument gives us an indication of Donatello's ability to merge his studies of nature with a classical mode of conception. He was by instinct one of the most unreserved naturalists who ever handled the chisel. He seeks to express every motive and to tell everything as plainly as possible, but while doing this he maintains in his most successful works a balance, a structural and formal assurance, and a gravity which he

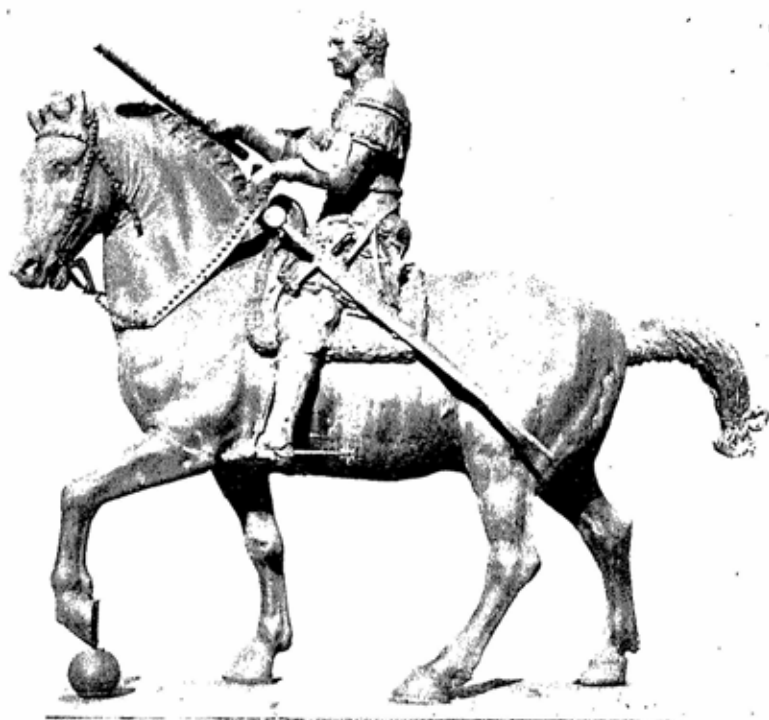


FIG. 24. DONATELLO. GATTAMELATA. EQUESTRIAN MONUMENT
(Padua)

Photo Anderzoo, Rome



IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTIQUE

learned from the antique. Donatello was not, like Ghiberti, an harmoniously balanced nature, he was not the man to pay much attention to formal beauty, when the point was to give expression to some strong emotion. His works are therefore uneven, and towards the close of his life we find him almost breaking the artistic mould to pieces in his endeavour to make the spiritual meaning stand forth the more lucidly. An instance in point is afforded by the reliefs in the pulpit of S. Lorenzo.

Donatello's great interest in the individual and in the characteristic has led him, in many instances, into other paths than those laid out by classical art, and because of this tendency, he has often been considered as one of the pioneers of modern art. This is, without doubt, one of the most significant and fascinating traits of his art, making him one of the old masters who stand in the closest personal relation to us.

And yet it is doubtful whether it is this trait which forms the basis of his absolute greatness. May not the latter depend rather on his ability to bring out the typical, that which enhances and explains a naturalistic appearance? In his happiest moments, Donatello exhibits that rare faculty of the truly great sculptor to synthesize form, without loss of vital qualities. He has a sure eye for the tectonic structure of the human body, and even if he never established any canon, he not infrequently endeavoured to produce works in which the formal ensemble is of fundamental importance. Not a few of his best works show a natural affinity with Greek art of the days of Polycletus and Phidias, and

ESSENTIALS IN ART

it is principally through these works that he has established his reputation as a classic master. And the remarkable feature of this is that the likeness usually does not appear to be the result of actual imitation or study, but of a genius akin to that of the ancients.

When the classical influence is most apparent, most genuine, and of the greatest merit in Donatello, it is probably also most unconscious. He has his eyes opened to the highest values of ancient sculpture earlier and more fully than anybody else. And we may say that he felt his kinship with the great ones, because he was one of them himself.



Photo Aldardi, Florence

FIG. 25. DONATELLO. HEAD OF GATTAMELATA



V

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE



A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

HALFWAY between Florence and Arezzo, in the middle of the fertile valley of the Arno, lies a little place called Figline. It seems to have possessed a certain importance even in the Middle Ages, for it still contains several ancient churches, and among them the one with which we are concerned here, the Misericordia, to which a large cloister is attached. The church itself is still in use, but the cloister has been converted into offices for the local authorities. The wall of the church on both sides of the main door is covered with large frescoes, once, apparently, larger still, for at least one figure seems to have been cut off by a porch erected inside the door. On the left is "The Crucifixion" (Fig. 26), on the right are "The Annunciation" and "The Coronation of the Virgin" on one plane, separated by painted arcading (Figs. 27, 28). The broad rectangular surfaces are occupied with large figures designed in a singularly attractive manner. The aim of the artist, a synthetic, rhythmical, linear composition, is evident to the spectator at a glance. The sweeping outlines of the elongated figures and the rich drapery are disposed with a marked feeling for decorative effect. The figures do not convince by a lifelike presentment of the human form, but are rather the symbolical expression of strong dramatic feeling, particularly conspicuous in

ESSENTIALS IN ART

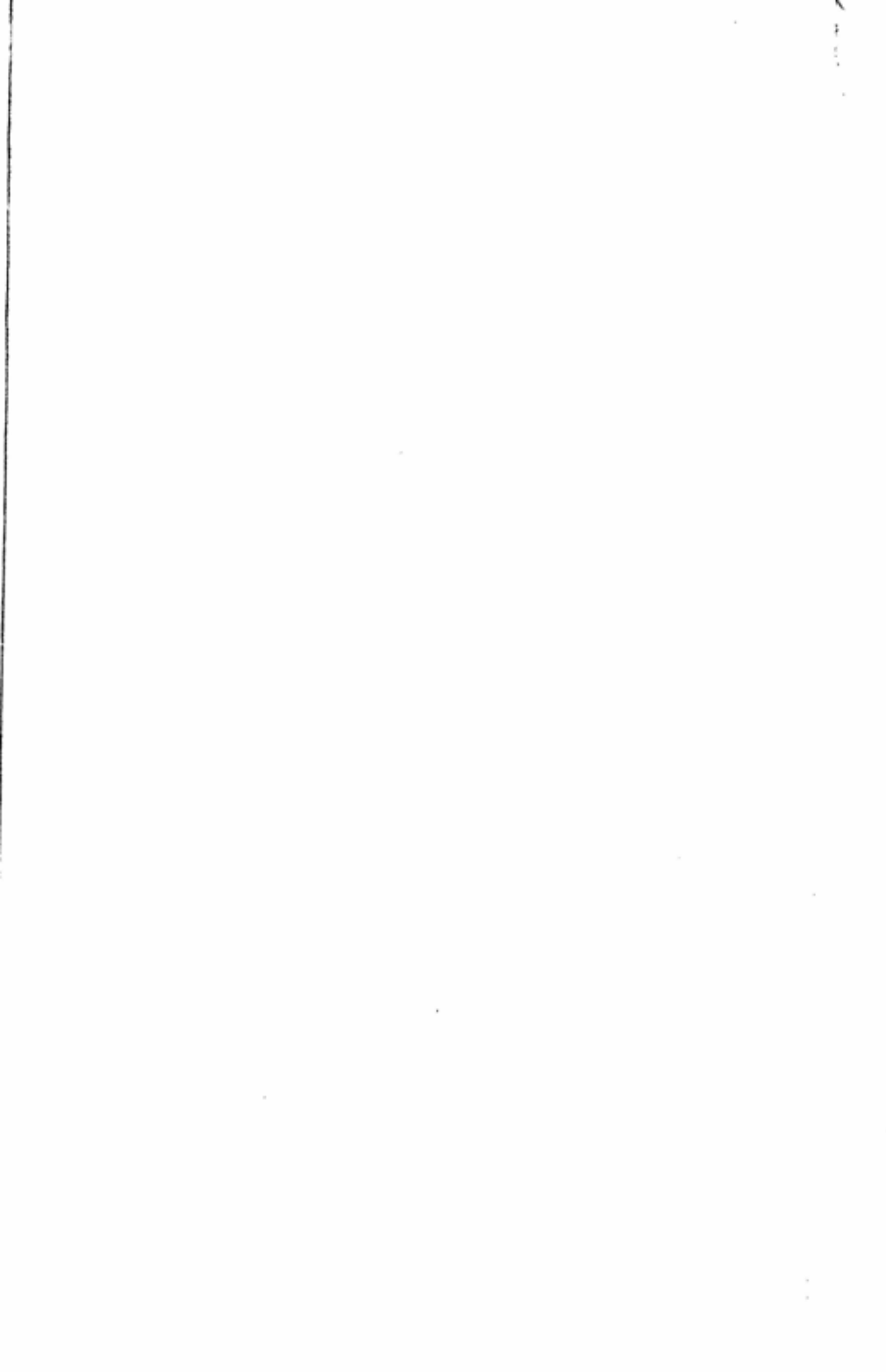
the flowing rhythms of the long curved lines. In other words, these three frescoes are typical late Gothic figure-compositions.

Those at all familiar with Tuscan art will at once perceive the near relation which these compositions bear to the leading late Gothic painter of Florence, Don Lorenzo Monaco. I have in another connection endeavoured to characterize his peculiar, individual style, explaining the special importance of the late Gothic "linear lyrics" as an artistic vehicle of expression in contrast with the naturalism of the dawning Renaissance.* A glance at Lorenzo Monaco's frescoes, painted about 1420 or shortly afterwards, in the Capella Bartolini in the Sta. Trinità, is sufficient to convince even an unpractised eye that the Figline frescoes belong to the same school. Indeed, the connection is so obvious that it would not astonish me if anyone mistook them for Lorenzo Monaco's work.

However, a closer scrutiny shows that the painter of the Figline frescoes can have been only a pupil of Lorenzo's. He has borrowed many things from the master, but he has not attained his refined and harmonious values of expression. In fact, he remains as a whole more archaic, still more external and ornamental than Lorenzo Monaco, without any tendencies towards a naturalistic treatment of the landscape, or towards aerial perspective, such as are discernible in Lorenzo's frescoes in the Capella Bartolini.

The composition of the Figline "Crucifixion" (Fig. 26) follows a fairly simple traditional scheme.

* Cf. "Don Lorenzo Monaco" (Strassburg, 1905)



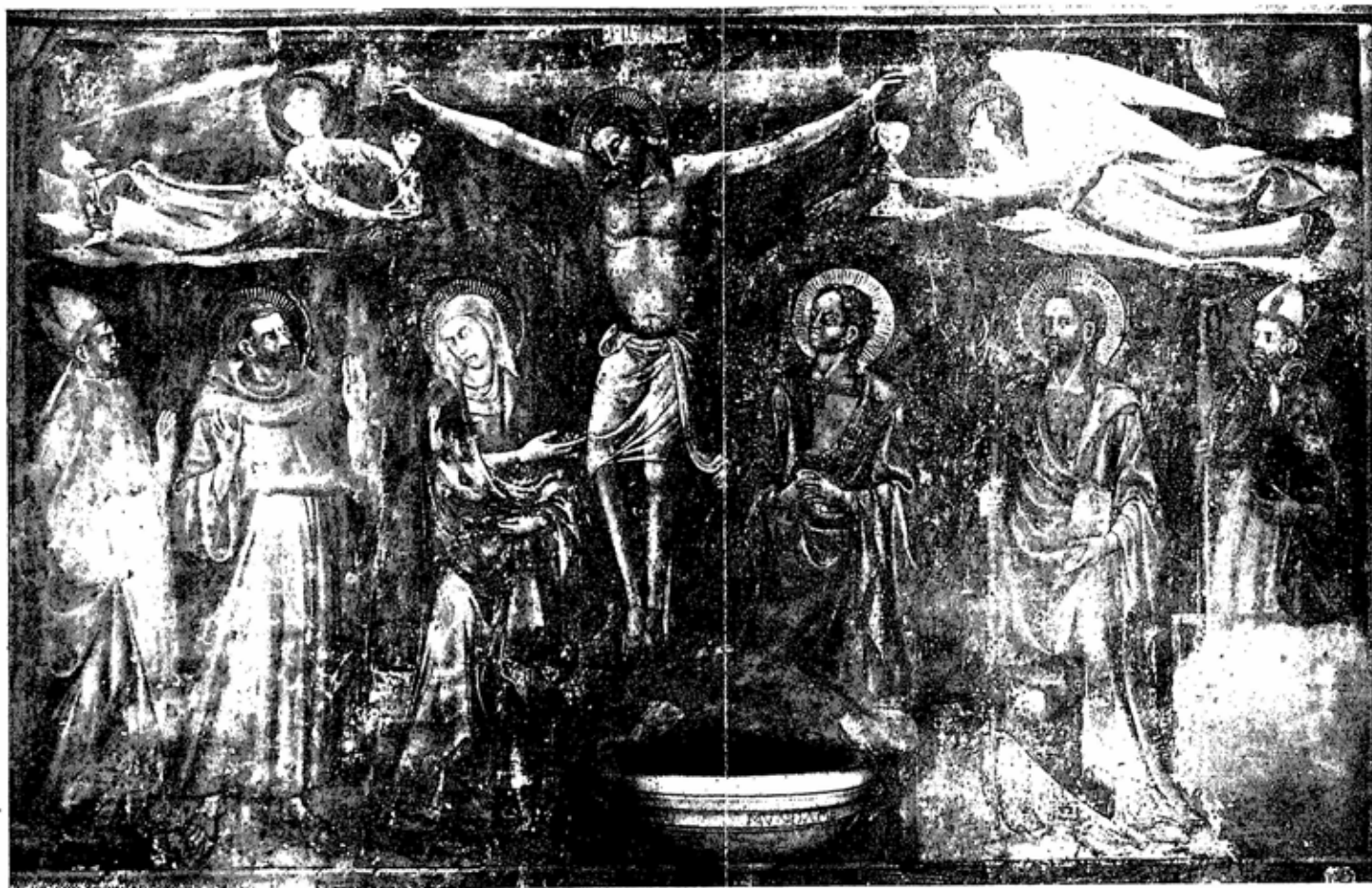


FIG. 26. THE CRUCIFIXION
(Church of the Misericordia, Figline)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

The central axis of the picture is formed by the cross, which is comparatively low; on either side of it, at equal distances from each other, stand three figures, the Virgin, SS. John, Francis, and James, and two bishops. Over these figures hover large angels, who are collecting the blood from Christ's hands. It is only through the Virgin's pointing gesture and the bend of the body that a certain amount of movement is introduced into the composition; in the other figures we are affected more by the rich decorative drapery than the feeble expression of feeling.

"The Annunciation" shows a livelier play of line (Fig. 27). The kneeling angel comes sailing in swiftly, borne on a cloud, with his garments fluttering in the wind. He approaches close to the Virgin, who shrinks back with a start, at the same time turning her head and the upper part of her body towards the messenger. Her mantle trails in long folds, the whole figure is summarized in the gently curving line which sweeps from the head right down to the hem of the mantle, and the same gentle curves are again conspicuous in the folds of the angel's dalmatic. There is studied art in the manner in which these figures have been grouped, but the composition is hardly the artist's own invention: it comes direct from Lorenzo Monaco's large "Annunciation" (about 1408-10) in the Academy of Florence, where the same rhythm of line has been invested with a still more distinguished and supple form.

"The Coronation of the Virgin" (Fig. 28) seems also to have been composed under the influence of Lorenzo Monaco's well-known "Coronation" in the

ESSENTIALS IN ART

Uffizi; only in the small playing and singing angels, who form a half-circle before the throne, does the artist reveal a more marked individual quality. The little angel in the middle, with the hand-organ—next to the kneeling client—is of particular interest in this respect (Fig. 29). He is seated on the ground with one leg bent under him, and the organ resting on the lifted knee; one hip is much curved inwards, the head is inclined sideways; through the whole figure flows a gentle sweep of line, which serves to accentuate the two-fold musical character. The same pose of sentimental expressiveness will be found to recur in several Madonnas by this artist. But all these Madonnas, as well as the frescoes at Figline, are unknown in art-literature. They are scattered in different museums and private collections, and pass as anonymous works of the school of Lorenzo Monaco, when they have not been ascribed to some more distant master. Thus, before we enter into the question of the individual painter, we must endeavour to obtain a general survey of the most important material. We have now, at any rate, some basis to work upon as regards time and style.

The greatest difficulties in this analysis of material arise from the fact that none of the works which more particularly concern us here is signed, and only one of them is dated. We are thus entirely thrown upon stylistic diagnostics. The ascription of the pictures, as well as their chronological grouping, must be based on criteria of style, which, of course, leave latitude for different points of view, particularly as regards the chronology. And indeed



FIG. 27. THE ANNUNCIATION
(*Church of the Misericordia, Figline*)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

it will not be possible for me to pause at each separate work to render an account of all the grounds on which my conclusion has been founded ; I must beg the reader to check my statements as best he may with the guidance of the reproductions, and otherwise to follow me on the way, until he can prove that I have led him wrong.

In the Uffizi there are three Madonnas by our master. The principal one, and probably the earliest, is No. 11 (*Ignoto*), the Madonna seated on clouds surrounded by a mandorla of cherubs (Fig. 30). On either side stand two angels, those in front holding vases with white lilies ; below them on the ground kneel SS. John the Baptist and Zenobius. The Madonna assumes that curious low sitting posture, with one leg bent under her and the other knee raised, which came into vogue in Siena through Lippo Memmi, and in Florence under the influence of Lorenzo Monaco. The Child is balanced in a rather precarious position on his mother's raised knee, and is reaching out laughingly towards one of the angels, as if to snatch at the stalk of the lily. Mary's eyes follow the Child's movement, and she holds him back with her left hand, while her enormously long right hand, with the neatly-turned, uniform, out-spread fingers, is held quite stiff, more for show than for use. This hand is one of the most characteristic mannerisms in the Madonnas of the master. The type of face is also very marked : an elongated oval with a little mouth, narrow penetrating eyes, and an unusually long and slightly oblique nose. The same type reappears, with slight modifications, in the attendant angels. But what

ESSENTIALS IN ART

above all conduces to give the picture a specially decorative effect is the flowing drapery ; the gold-embroidered hem of the Virgin's mantle descends in sinuous lines towards the horizontal plane of the bed of clouds, where it forms an undulating ornament, and in the soft mantle of the kneeling S. John the folds fall almost in cascades. The ends are drawn out in long waves on the floor. It is evident that if these figures stood up, they would look enormously tall and lean, so tall that they could hardly hold themselves erect without assuming that Gothic S-shape bend in which the protruding belly compensates for the backward bend of the shoulders. Considering their exaggerated height, it is fortunate that the Virgin is seated and the saints kneeling.

In connection with this characteristic work in the Uffizi should be mentioned a rather large Madonna which used to belong to Professor G. Voss in Berlin. The Virgin is sitting here in the same low posture as in the foregoing picture, though not on a bed of clouds, but on a cushion. Besides her are two standing saints, SS. Francis and Anthony, and on the brocade carpet before her sit SS. Mary Magdalen and Agatha, all on a much smaller scale than the Virgin. In this case the Child is quite uninterested in his surroundings ; he nestles close to his mother, evidently striving to open the neck-band of her dress in order to reach her breasts. He is kicking and sprawling impatiently with his bare feet in true baby fashion. We recognize from the previous picture the Virgin's enormous hands, and also the type, which seems to be somewhat more refined (with a less exaggerated length of nose), and above all the



FIG. 28. THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN
(Church of the Misericordia, Figline)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

calligraphically ornamental treatment of the drapery. The picture is moreover distinguished by a rare beauty of colour. The Virgin's crimson tunic under the blue mantle tells gorgeously against the gold ground: the carpet with the gold brocade pattern on a red ground accords harmoniously with the deep colour of the dress. The somewhat firmer modelling of the figures and the singular care with which the whole picture has been executed perhaps warrant us in dating it a little earlier still than picture No. 11 in the Uffizi.

A Madonna of about the same date as the previous one is to be found in the possession of Mr. Charles Ricketts in London. It shows the same beautiful colour-scheme with deep red, blue and yellow as the principal tones, but the composition is simpler and more graceful. The Virgin is seated on a low cushion with one leg bent under her, her mantle forming an abundance of ornamental waves on the floor. Unhappily, the preservation of the picture is not so good as Professor Voss's.

A large altar wing in the Bonn Museum (ascribed to Lorenzo Monaco) representing SS. Mary Magdalen and Laurence, in the act of presenting their client, a kneeling cardinal, also evidently belongs to the same period (Fig. 31). The type of S. Mary Magdalen is a faithful copy of that of the Uffizi Madonna. The only part of her hands that is distinctly visible is a thumb; but the hand of S. Laurence exhibits the shape already described all the more distinctly. His facial type also bears a close resemblance to that of Professor Voss's Madonna. Both figures are tall and bent slightly sideways;

ESSENTIALS IN ART

they have small heads, and are enveloped in mantles with an overwhelming richness of folds. Particularly, the hem of S. Mary Magdalen's mantle affords the best example of the master's accomplishment in the harmony of undulating lines. The kneeling cardinal, who is gazing upwards, doubtless towards an infant Christ in the act of benediction, is a comparatively well-individualized portrait, fascinating by the rapt intensity of the gaze. It is almost a surprise to find so life-like a portrait in the work of this master.

After making acquaintance with this uncommonly beautiful wing it becomes a particularly interesting inquiry what the central panel of the altar-piece was like. It was doubtless a Madonna of somewhat larger proportion than the saints. We may also take it for granted that the Child on her lap turned in benediction towards a kneeling client. A Madonna which fulfils these formal conditions and bears a close stylistical resemblance to the figures of the wing is to be found in the collection of the late Mr. J. G. Johnson at Philadelphia (Fig. 32). The picture has been cut both at the top and at the bottom, but is otherwise well preserved. The Virgin here is not seated on the ground, but on a marble throne with a niche-like back. She is holding the Child, perfectly nude, upright upon her knee. He is shuffling his feet in rather a fidgety way, shivering in his nakedness, turning at the same time to the left, and stretching out his right hand in benediction. He is putting his left hand, which holds an ear of maize, to his breast. The head and eyes follow the benedictory movement of the right hand. His mother is holding him very tenderly with her big

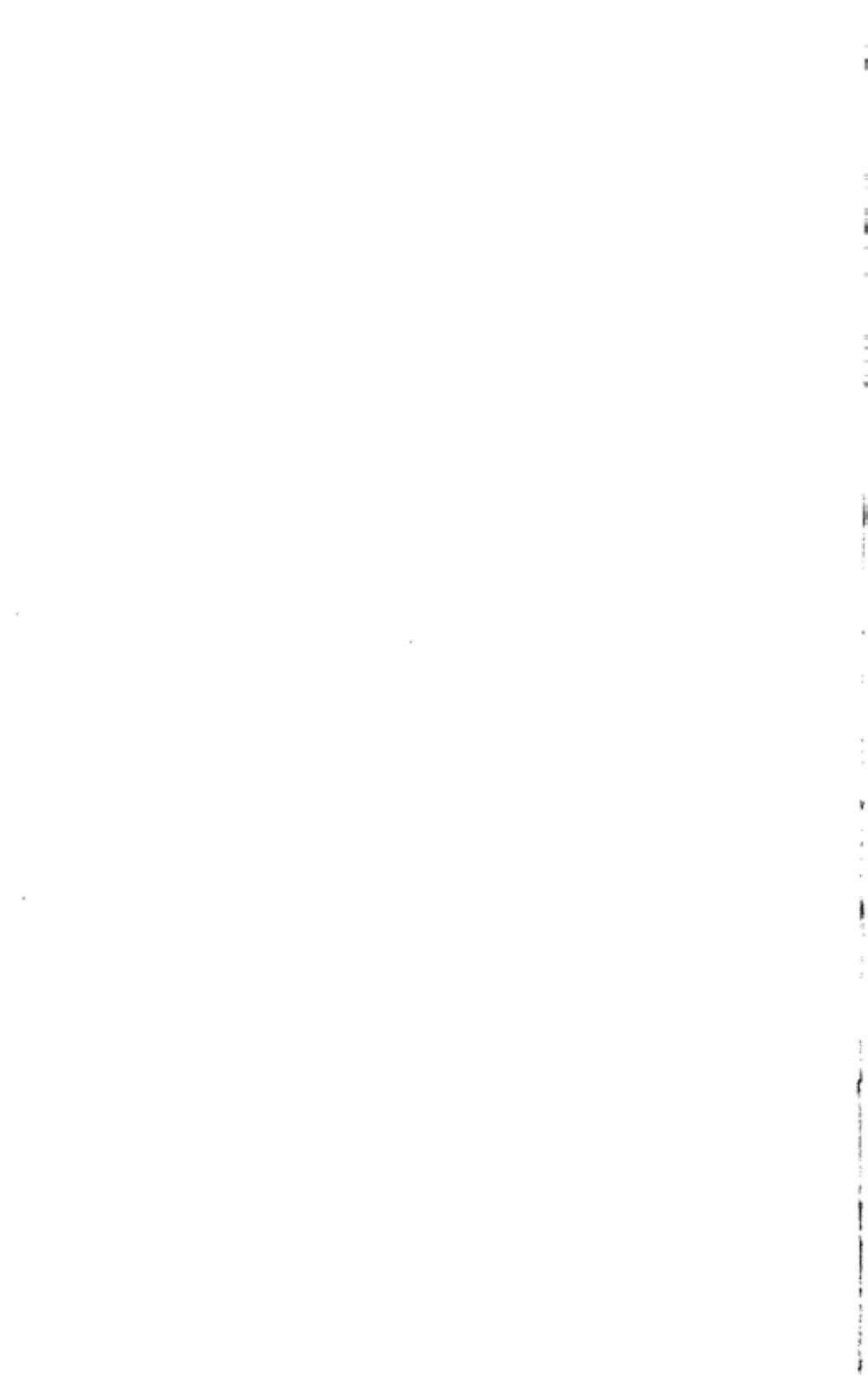
136



FIG. 29. ANGEL WITH HAND-ORGAN
(*The Misericordia Church, Fidenza*)



FIG. 33. LORENZO Ghiberti. MADONNA
TERRA-COTTA RELIEF
(*Victoria and Albert Museum*)



A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

stiff fingers, wrapping the ends of her veil round his loins, but otherwise, curiously enough, she is paying no attention to the object of the Child's benediction. The most likely assumption is that this Madonna formed the central panel in an altar-piece in which the Bonn picture was the left wing: so well does the Child's movement respond to the posture of the kneeling cardinal, so strikingly similar in shape are the Virgin's and S. Laurence's hands. This hypothesis, however, should merely be regarded as a suggestion requiring a closer examination with the aid of the original pictures. This much is certain, that both the Madonna and the Child in the Johnson picture are more monumental and more vigorous than in the master's other works. They are not characterized by such a gentle rhythm of line, such a pervading softness as the Madonnas which I have previously described; the influence of Lorenzo Monaco is less evident both in the composition and in the drawing of the figures. They seem to me rather to reveal the influence of another, contemporary or slightly younger, Florentine artist, Masolino da Panicale. A comparison with Masolino's fresco Madonna in a lunette at Empoli shows that contact may well have taken place between the two artists, although they exhibit rather different temperaments. Masolino was a further advanced naturalistic painter, who in spite of his evident connection with Gothic figure art, had more feeling for material form and the structure of the human body than our anonymous poet of line. However, there is something in the rounded type

ESSENTIALS IN ART

and uncommonly painstaking modelling of the Child that warrants us in recalling certain juvenile work of Masolino's, such as the Munich Madonna, as well as Lorenzo Monaco's Madonnas; indeed, it seems to me that this is the best possible explanation of the somewhat modified character of the style of our anonymous master, unless we should assume the influence of some sculptor, such as Lorenzo Ghiberti. In this connection I beg to refer the reader to the terra-cotta relief of a low-sitting Madonna in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 33), which I ascribed some years ago to Ghiberti.* This relief also contains a *bambino* akin to the Child in the picture here under discussion.

The nearest parallel to the Johnson picture is a Madonna recently acquired by the Helsingfors Museum (Fig. 34). In particular, the main figure, with its comparatively robust structure and statue-like bearing, reminds us of the Madonna just described and distinguishes her from the low-sitting type. And here too, as in the previous cases, the big marble throne with the high back adds to the monumental stability of the composition.

If the Madonna is thus very nearly allied to the one in Philadelphia—which is also true of the facial type—the Child shows considerable divergences. In lieu of the childlike sprightliness, the manifold and restless movement, we find a hieratic stiffness, which, however, appears to be accompanied by real exertion. The Child's little hand tightens

* Cf. "Studieri Florentinsk Renässans skulptur," p. 66 (Stockholm, 1909). See *Burlington Magazine*, vol. xvi, p. 354 (March, 1910).



Photo Alinari, Florence

FIG. 30. MADONNA ON CLOUDS, AND SAINTS
(Uffizi, Florence)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

firmly round his mother's thumb, and he draws himself up as if he had to play the part of a haughty prelate as he bestows the ritual blessing with two fingers of the other hand. We can easily fancy him behaving the next minute with the rather boisterous liveliness which I noted in the earlier pictures. The Child's type with the chubby cheeks and the snub nose is to be recognized from the Uffizi Madonna, which I described first. In view of the comparatively solemn and severe character of the picture, I am disposed to range it among the master's earliest works.

There are several other pictures which bear a close relation to those already described—amongst others, an admirable little Annunciation in the University Museum of Göttingen, a larger Madonna in the Christ Church Library at Oxford, and two music-making angels in the collection of Mr. R. Benson in London—but they must be omitted here, for it is not my intention to describe all the works of the master, but merely to endeavour to trace the main lines of his development. Unfortunately none of the Madonnas referred to are dated. However, for stylistic reasons, the group which they form in common should probably be assigned to a comparatively early epoch in the master's course. Other works by the same painter exhibit more marked symptoms of decadence. As these latter can be dated about 1420, or rather later, the Madonnas described above may be placed in the preceding decade.

The later group is represented by three large altar-pieces, one in the Palazzo Doria at Rome, one

ESSENTIALS IN ART

at Borgo alla Collina, and one at Stia in Casentino. But, besides these, there are several smaller pictures bearing the impress of the same style.

The altar-piece in the Palazzo Doria exhibits in the central panel the Madonna sitting on a brocaded Gothic throne (Fig. 35). She is very tall and lean. The Child is lying in her lap in a rather awkward position; he is kicking out with his feet and stretching forward as if to take hold of one of the angel musicians; in the left hand he holds a bird. The angel with the mandoline shrinks back startled, whereas his companion, on the Virgin's left, continues to play his viola and sing at the top of his voice. In the foreground kneel two other angels with big flower-vases, slender and ethereal, like visions from heaven. In each wing stand two saints, SS. Peter and Anthony, SS. John the Baptist and Matthew, all half-turned towards the Virgin but completely isolated, each under his arch without any inter-relation. In the tympanum of the arches medallions are inserted; the central one probably held a figure of God the Father, but the paint has now been scraped away; the two side medallions contain angels. Vivid vermilion, orange, green and blue tones shimmer against the gold background. The framework is richly ornamented, the Gothic arches are embellished with crockets and finials. The whole is a typical example of the dislocated and florid late Gothic style of decoration.

Somewhat of the same kind, though less well preserved, is the altar-piece in the little village church of Borgo alla Collina in Casentino (Fig. 36). The Virgin is seated on an undraped

140



FIG. 31. SS. MARY MAGDALEN AND LAURENCE
(*Museum, Bonn*)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

marble throne; the Child assumes almost the same twisted position as in the previous picture, but instead of reaching out to take hold of an angel, he is putting the ring on the finger of the kneeling S. Catherine. Behind S. Catherine stand the archangel Michael and S. Louis of Toulouse. From the other side approaches Tobias protected by the archangel Raphael, and S. Francis. The saints are disposed in pairs, obliquely one behind the other, whereby a certain, though only slight, effect of depth is produced. The predella contains scenes from the lives of the same saints, and over it, on the frame itself, is the following inscription: *Hic opus istius capele fecit fieri egregia dñā cometissa helisabeth de batte MCCCCXXIII die pñā augusti*. The donor was the Countess Elisabetta da Battifolle, a daughter of Count Roberto, the owner of the Castello del Borgo alla Collina, which he bequeathed to his daughter. As the young Tobias appears here in the foreground, it is probable that the countess commissioned the altar-piece for the church of her parish on the occasion of some son or relation of hers having started out on a long journey to foreign countries. The intention was to consign the young traveller to the special protection of the archangel Raphael.

The stylistic connection between these two altar-pieces is so obvious that it need scarcely be enlarged on. The figures are in both cases uncommonly doll-like and incapable of making use of their extremities. Their little heads are set like big buds on the stalk-like bodies.

Still more elongated, thread-like, and unreal

ESSENTIALS IN ART

appear the figures in the Assumption which forms the altar-piece at Stia, another idyllic village in Casentino (Fig. 37). The Virgin is seated in the usual low position on a bed of clouds, surrounded by a mandorla of rays, and as she sails upwards with the aid of angels and cherubs, she drops the sacred girdle down to S. Thomas, who is kneeling with his arms stretched above his head. On either side stand the other apostles, gazing upwards, full of amazement at the dazzling cloud and light. John has writing materials to hand to record the matter, Paul his sword, James his pilgrim's staff, Andrew his cross—of the other apostles only the heads or halos are visible. There is not room here for more than two figures abreast, though they are narrow as splinters and thin as shadows. They really consist only of mantle drapery which falls in whirling cascades down from the narrow shoulders and the short arms. It is difficult to conceive more purely ornamental human figures.

A picture which stylistically, but not in size, forms a kind of pendant to this altar-piece is the little "Death of the Virgin" (Fig. 38), which passed from the Butler collection into the Johnson collection at Philadelphia. In this picture there is such a throng of by-standers that those behind can only be indicated by their halos; for no third dimension exists in the paintings of our artist. His figures are rather a kind of decorative pattern of lines than human beings endowed with material bodies. The apostles are squeezed in between the Virgin's catafalque and a projecting rock. Four angels are holding the dead body of the Virgin on a cloth of gold brocade, and at the foot

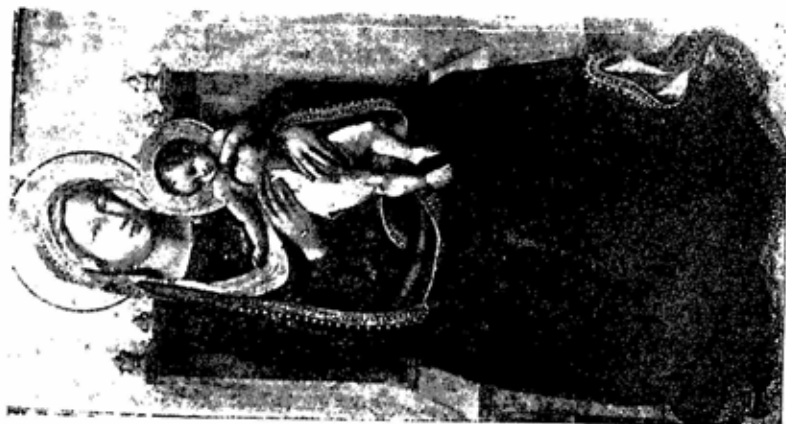


FIG. 32. MADONNA
(John G. Johnson, Coll., Philadelphia)



FIG. 34. MADONNA
(Alphonse, Heringford)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

stands Christ himself, receiving her soul in his arms. He is attended by a retinue of heavenly satellites, who are also doing their best to see something of the miracle. But the most interesting figure of all is the apostle who is seated on the floor in the foreground, engrossed in reading. It is almost as if he were seated on swelling waves, so profusely do the long folds of the broad mantle wind and twist around him. This calligraphic richness of scrolls in conjunction with the crouching immovable posture of the figure itself carries the thoughts to the Eastern representations of meditating Buddhist saints.*

We find something of this exuberant and overflowing treatment of the folds also in some Madonnas from the later period of the master. One of the most beautiful of these is kept in the storeroom of the Uffizi, being, unfortunately, so much painted over that it is not fit to be exhibited (Fig. 39). The composition—the low-sitting Virgin clasping tenderly to her breast her Child, who stands erect—is, however, uncommonly expressive. It approaches rather closely to Lorenzo Monaco's Madonna compositions, and must be accounted among the best of its kind. The typically exaggerated shape of hand comes out in this picture, too, in a very conspicuous manner.

Very closely related to this picture is the Madonna in the Sterbini collection in Rome (Fig. 40). She is seated on a cushion, like the Uffizi Madonna, and the Child is standing on her knee, but instead of caressing his mother under the chin, he is striving to take hold of her breast in order to appease his

* Another version of the same subject by our master belonged to the Dollfus collection in Paris (sold in March, 1912).

ESSENTIALS IN ART

hunger. The mother's head, like a fading flower, droops heavily towards the Child; her neck is so slender that it seems scarcely able to support the head. The contours which in gentle curves follow the Virgin's sides, shoulder and neck, thus glide over into the figure of the standing Child, and are then carried further, along the lifted knee and the leg down to the floor, where they run out in the waves of the hem of the mantle. The group is well defined, and thus attains a remarkable decorative stability. The rhythm of the lines has a languishing tempo, which expresses much of the suavity of the feeling. As an harmonious counterpart to the figure group, the arch of the frame also runs in a gentle sweep.

The same Madonna returns in two more pictures by our master. One of these was seen by us some years ago at a small dealer's in Florence; in this picture two kneeling angels with flower-vases were added in the foreground. The other Madonna was lately acquired by us from an English collection; here the Virgin is accompanied by four saints and two small angels who are holding a crown over her head.

In addition to these may be mentioned a Madonna which used to belong to the well-known art-dealer, now deceased, Galli-Dunn at Poggibonsi. * Remarkably enough, it was given a place at the great exhibition of Sienese art in 1904, which plainly shows how nearly related to Sienese paintings of the early quattro-cento these Madonnas must be considered to be. They express in any case a similar celestial adoration, and the vehicle of expression is,

* This picture was sold at the Blakeslee sale in New York, 1915, and bought by Mr. John D. McKhenny of Philadelphia.



FIG. 35. MADONNA AND SAINTS
(Triptych, Galleria Doria, Rome)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

just as in the Sienese pictures, lines rather than form. A detail of particular interest is the ornamentation, for example in the halos. They are wrought in big geometrical patterns in the later pictures, whereas the halos of the earlier Madonnas are, as a rule, merely adorned with a plain wreath of leaves. It may be said as a whole that the decorative effect is more refined and uniform, the rhythm more expressive in the later Madonnas than in the earlier; the earlier, on the other hand, are more fleshly, and exhibit a firmer structure. In the big altar-pieces the artist has not been able to gather the scattered figures into a harmonious linear composition: their effect is disjointed and lacking in repose, and they are thus far less engaging than the smaller Madonnas.

It is as a tender lyric poet, as a sentimental rhapsodist of the Virgin's praises, that this painter best gives expression to his artistic personality.

The Madonnas and the altar-pieces already described form an entirely homogeneous group with a very marked unity of style. What strikes us particularly is the exaggeration in the elongated figures, in the richness and decorative treatment of the drapery, and in the drawing of the big, thin hands. The figures under the flowing drapery are structureless dolls with hands as thin as leaves and fingers like spiders' legs, but evidently of little use as prehensile organs. And on these lanky bodies are set small heads inclined wearily to one side, with the features and especially the long nose often drawn obliquely. But the deformations are indeed

ESSENTIALS IN ART

admirably adapted to emphasize the emotional expressiveness of the figures.

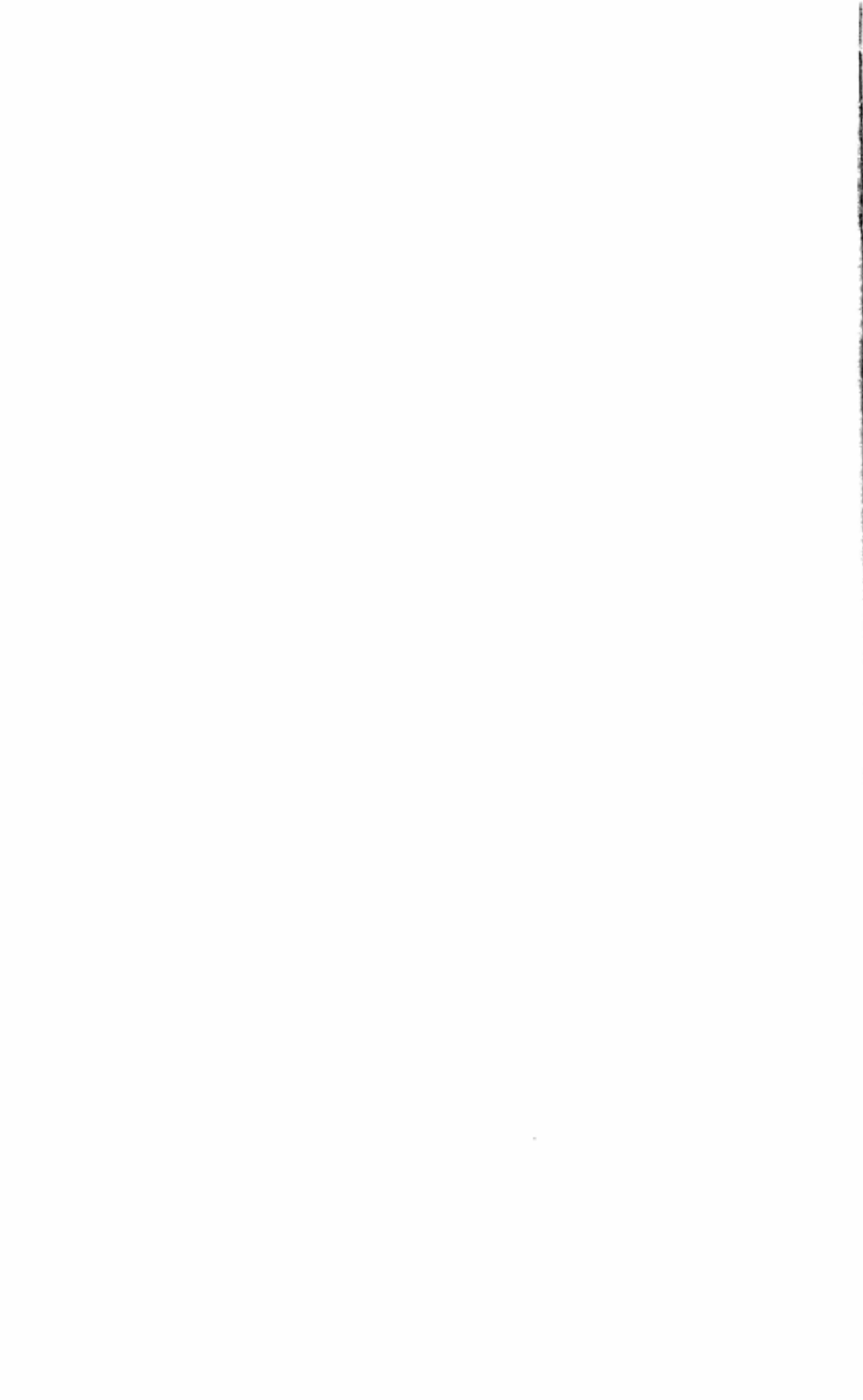
The Figline frescoes exhibit the same characteristic oblique types, thin hands, and exuberant drapery (*e.g.* the Annunciation). Their close relation to the Madonnas is proved unmistakably by the angel with the hand-organ, who tallies directly with the Sterbini Madonna. This seems also to warrant the supposition that the Figline frescoes belong to a comparatively advanced period, *i.e.* near or immediately after 1420.

On the ground of the lively and mobile temperament characteristic of the infant Christ in a number of these Madonnas, I ventured in my monograph on Lorenzo Monaco to call the anonymous artist "il maestro del bambino vispo." He is thus sharply demarcated from the usually rather senile-looking infants, found everywhere in the pictures of the trecento painters. The Child was in fact the last human *motto* conquered by art in its struggle to attain naturalistic expression; first came the old men, then the women, and last the children. At the beginning of the fifteenth century this conquest was still far from completed. The infant Christ is then generally a doll, or a little old man, quite unmoved by human feeling. In view of this it is rather remarkable to find a late Gothic painter exhibiting an evident endeavour—even if he has not always succeeded—to represent the Child with traits of childish playfulness.

In pointing out the general characteristics of the painter's style in the works described, I have at the same time traced the influences which seem to have



FIG. 36. MADONNA AND SAINTS
(Triptych. Borgo alla Collina, Casentino.)



A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

determined his development. As I have stated, in most of the Madonnas we see very distinctly the influence of Lorenzo Monaco, the central figure among the late Gothic painters of Tuscany ; but we have also found that some influence seems to have reached the painter from Masolino, and possibly from Ghiberti. Moreover, it would not be difficult to show parallels with Sienese painters, such as Taddeo de Bartolo (*cf.* his altar-piece at Volterra of the year 1411), Paolo di Giovanni di Fei, Giovanni di Paolo, and others ; but since our artist is evidently not of Sienese origin, it would carry us too far to compare him with contemporary Sienese painters. We have every reason to confine ourselves to the circle of late Gothic painters gathered round Lorenzo Monaco at Florence. Among well-known names of this circle, which I hope to deal with more fully in another connection, I note particularly the following : Mariotto di Nardo, Lorenzo di Niccolò, Jacopo di Rossello Franchi, Giovanni dal Ponte, Giovanni del Biondo, Lorenzo di Bicci and Parri Spinelli. Although these artists, with other contemporaries, have usually been massed together, without any attempt to discriminate between them, they each have a marked individuality of expression, even if it was not developed on the basis of naturalistic studies, but as a sort of ornamental calligraphy. Those who have gained some knowledge of the painters mentioned will certainly agree with me that none of them had anything to do with the pictures which I have described—with one exception : Parri Spinelli. I must, however, point out at once that the Parri Spinelli known in the history of art by

ESSENTIALS IN ART

certain paintings at Arezzo seems rather alien to the work of the painter whom I have called "il maestro del bambino vispo." But these paintings at Arezzo are comparatively late works, after Parri had evidently undergone a long process of development with sharply demarcated periods. Vasari gives us full information on this score in his panegyric life of Parri. No doubt, much of the praise lavished on this painter by Vasari was due to local partiality, since both Parri and Vasari came from Arezzo, but such a description could not have been made at all unless there had been something remarkable about the subject of it. A few extracts from Vasari's account will serve to throw light on Parri's art and personality.

The artist was born in 1387 and died in 1453.* In 1407 he was summoned to Siena together with his father, Spinello Aretino, to execute the frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico, a work which was not commenced until 1408 and was probably continued almost down to Spinello's death in 1410. The paintings in question, which represent scenes from the life of Pope Alexander III, are one of the most fascinating and richly varied narrative series preserved from those times; and, as Spinello was already seventy-five years of age when he received the commission, we have good grounds for assuming that Parri, his son

* Cf. Vasari, "Vita di Parri Spinelli," with notes by G. Milanesi, ed. Sansoni, vol. ii, pp. 275-85. Lately some additional documents referring to works by Parri Spinelli have been published by Mario Salmi in "L'Arte," 1913, II. Some historical notes about Parri and his works are enumerated by Gamurri in his article "I pittori aretini," etc., published in "Rivista d'Arte," 1919. Neither of these later articles offers, however, any new material for the reconstruction of Parri as an artist.



FIG. 37
ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN
(*Stef. Cantino*)

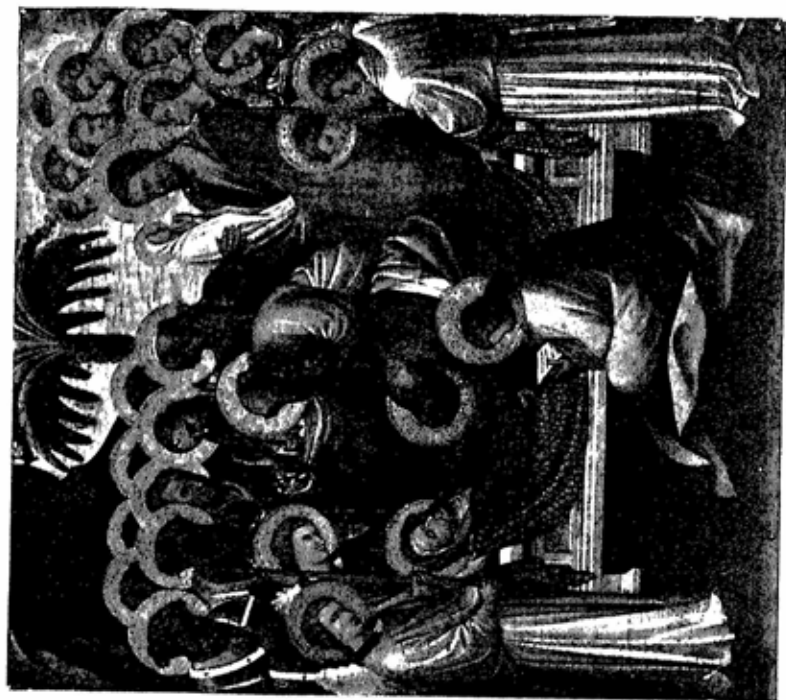


FIG. 38. DEATH OF THE VIRGIN
(*Johann G. Johanne Cuv. Philad. 1784*)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

and collaborator on equal terms, took no little part in the actual execution. But the character of the style in these paintings is still materially the same as in Spinello's earlier series of frescoes at S. Miniato al Monte and at L'Antella near Florence. After the death of the father, Parri seems to have moved to Florence. Vasari states that Parri was admitted to the school of Lorenzo Ghiberti, "where so many young men were then receiving their training, and as they were then engaged in chasing the gates of San Giovanni (the Baptistry), Parri too, like several others, was set to work at these figures. This gave him an opportunity of making the acquaintance of Masolino di Panicale, whose style of drawing attracted him greatly, and whom he imitated in several respects, though doubtless he partly also adopted the manner of Don Lorenzo degli Angeli. Parri painted figures much longer and slenderer than any of his predecessors, and whereas others at the most gave them a height equal to ten heads, he made them of eleven and sometimes of twelve. Nor were they ungraceful, though lean, but they were invariably bent to one side or to the other, because, as Parri himself used to say, they had thus more 'bravura.' His treatment of the folds was very supple and rich, the garments fell in long folds from the arms right down to the feet."

The artist's style could hardly be more explicitly characterized, and it will doubtless be admitted that it accords remarkably well with the paintings described in the foregoing pages.

Vasari goes on to say that when Parri had lived many years away from his native town he finally

ESSENTIALS IN ART

resolved, after his father's death, and at the exhortation of his relatives, to return to Arezzo, where he displayed a very extensive activity chiefly as a painter, but also as an architect. Several of his principal series of frescoes are also described, but most of them have been lost. This is the case with his scenes from the life of S. Tommasuolo in the ancient cathedral of Arezzo, with the frescoes in S. Cristofano, with the paintings in the cloister of S. Bernardo, with the church at Sargiano for which Parri executed a model, with the paintings in the chapel of S. Bernardino in the cathedral, and with those at S. Agostino and at S. Giustino.

Vasari had already occasion to pity "the poor painter," whose works had to such a great extent been destroyed through damp or accident, or in the course of rebuilding. However, a number of his frescoes still exist in the church of S. Domenico (a Crucifixion and scenes from the life of S. Nicholas), in the church of S. Francesco (fragments of scenes from the life of Christ and of S. Francis), and also two of the paintings which he executed for the Misericordia brotherhood, now preserved in the Pinacoteca and the Palazzo Comunale.

Vasari, moreover, informs us that while Parri was painting in S. Domenico he was assailed by some armed relatives with whom he was at variance about an inheritance, and although some bystanders hastened to rescue him before any injury had been done to him, yet it is said that he received such a shock that he ever afterwards executed his figures not merely much bent to one side, but also with an expression of terror. And, feeling himself much

150



FIG. 39. MADONNA
(Stem room of the Uffizi, Florence)



FIG. 40. MADONNA
(Stabat Mater, Rome)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

maligned by evil tongues, he painted in the same chapel a picture representing a great number of tongues of flame with devils keeping up the fire surmounted by a figure of Christ cursing them. So much for Vasari.

It seems almost as if the evil tongues had not yet left off maligning Parri; at any rate Crowe and Cavalcaselle's estimate of the painter is far too disparaging in its tone. In the latter part of his life he evidently became eccentric, over-sensitive, and melancholic. Vasari maintains that he shortened his life by his melancholy anchorite existence. A modern writer would probably describe him as "suffering from extreme nervous prostration." He has himself confirmed this in his "*portata al Catasto*" of the year 1427, where he states that he had been afflicted for years with a severe nervous affection which had hindered him in his work, and was attended by the total loss of his memory.*

In all probability this nervous disease formed a line of demarcation in his life and artistic production. The work he did after this crisis evinces such evident symptoms of decadence and such a flagrant lack of balance and self-control, that it almost seems as if he had never fully recovered from his affliction. Yet it is by the work of his old age that he has found a place in the history of art. His best-known works are the Crucifixion

* Mario Salmi opposes in his article Milanese's statement that Parri suffered from some kind of nervous prostration, because the document simply states that Parri was sick. To us it seems, however, quite possible that Milanese may have had some additional reason to declare the sickness as mainly an affection of the nerves, and Vasari, who certainly was well familiar with the traditions in Arezzo, describes Parri all through his "*Life*" as an extremely nervous person.

ESSENTIALS IN ART

at San Domenico, and the picture of "The Madonna protecting the Aretines, with SS. Laurentius and Pergentinus" in the Pinacoteca, which was ordered by the Fraternità della Misericordia on June 16, 1435, and finished two years later (Fig. 41). The pictures in Sta. Maria delle Grazie and in the Sala di Giustizia of the Palazzo Comunale are in a worse state of preservation. In both these works we find figures more like curved flower-stalks or contorted mannikins than human beings, clad in drapery almost unsurpassed in its exaggerated profuseness. However, it cannot be denied that the forced exaggeration of the postures enhances their dramatic expression, particularly in the representation of the Crucifixion.*

In "The Virgin protecting the Aretines" it is the overwhelming central figure and the two kneeling saints that especially exhibit characteristic elements of style, and here, in fact, we have no difficulty in recognizing the oblique types with the long noses, the big, thin hands with the thread-like fingers, and the long flowing parallel folds, all well-marked peculiarities which we see almost equally pronounced in the altar-pieces of the Galleria Doria, and of Borgo alla Collina and Stia, two small hill cities of the Casentino. A comparison between the three Madonnas naturally suggests itself; we should also note the characteristic bambino with the chubby cheeks, and the much-bent figures

* Lately a large fresco painting by Parri, representing a "Madonna del Soccorso," has been brought to light in the Palazzo di Fraternità at Arezzo. It was painted in 1448, and is now in a poor state of preservation. Cf. A. Del Vita, *Documenti su due pitture di Parri Spinelli*. "Rassegna d'Arte," 1913.



FIG. 41. THE VIRGIN PROTECTING THE ARETINES
(*Pinnocchia, Arezzo*)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

of the angels. The kneeling saints have their nearest counterpart in two of the youngest apostles in the Assumption at Stia, particularly SS. James and Thomas. The same lax mannerism reveals itself in types, hands and drapery, the same exaggerated sentimentality speaks everywhere out of pose and expression.

It seems to us therefore incontestable that the altar-pieces at Stia and Borgo alla Collina form the connecting link between our group of Madonnas and Parri Spinelli's works at Arezzo. They constitute the intermediate stage between two different phases of style in the development of the painter, just as the places where they are found lie half-way between Florence and Arezzo. The comparatively wide gulf between the Florentine Madonnas and the Arezzo paintings can be accounted for by the intervening period of sickness, about the middle of the twenties, which made a break in Parri's activity. Moreover, it is quite natural that the youthful impressions from Florence, especially from the art of Masolino and Lorenzo Monaco, should have gradually faded away, as Parri worked in melancholy solitude at Arezzo. He became, in fact, more and more eccentric in his art, yet always with traces of a genuine temperament.

The chain of evidence could, moreover, be drawn tighter by pointing out a number of juvenile works by Parri Spinelli at Arezzo, particularly in the church of S. Francesco, where more paintings were newly brought to light in the course of the recent restorations. It is true that they are in general not very well preserved; but it is not

ESSENTIALS IN ART

difficult to recognize Parri's hand, for instance, in the "Christ at the Pharisee's Feast," "The Stigmatization of S. Francis," and other scenes of his life, as well as in the graceful figure of the archangel Michael (Fig. 42). This beautiful decorative figure is directly related with the earlier Madonnas: for example, with the picture at Helsingfors. Here we find Parri still working in his father's manner, retaining much of that statue-like firmness which is distinctive of Spinello Aretino's figures. It is, in fact, by no means improbable that this Madonna was painted at Arezzo, prior to Parri's period of training under the Florentine masters, even if he had already seen a number of their works. In this connection we may also once more recall the small Annunciation in Göttingen which evidently is an early work by Parri exhibiting close stylistic relations with Spinello's Annunciations on the façade of S. Annunziata and in S. Domenico in Arezzo.

It is, however, of paramount interest to observe how the old Spinello Aretino had already executed Madonna pictures which, so to speak, anticipate or prepare the way for the son's livelier and freer compositions of the same kind. I am thinking in particular of the large Madonnas in the Fogg Museum at Cambridge, U.S.A., and in Città di Castello (Fig. 43). In both these cases he has attempted a representation of a bambino which well justifies the appellation of "bambino vispo." The Child is kicking out with his feet, playing with his mother's kerchief, and clasping a bird in the other hand. The posture is remarkably similar, for instance, in Parri's picture in the former Galli-Dunn collection,



FIG. 42. ST. MICHAEL
(S. *Francesco, Arezzo*)

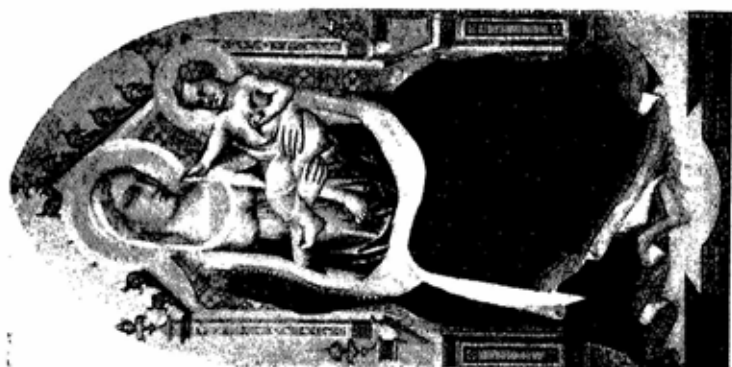


FIG. 43. SPINELLI, ARETINO MAISONNA
'Città di Castello'



A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

or in the Uffizi Madonna. The Virgin's type is coarser and broader, but may with good reason be called a prototype of the Madonna in Parri's pictures. The connection of the types in the Città di Castello Madonna and the late Mr. Johnson's is so intimate that I am almost inclined to believe that Parri collaborated to some extent in the first-named picture. When he painted the Johnson Madonna he had meanwhile already come in touch with a more modern movement in Florentine art.

Parri Spinelli is thus essentially a transitional character, a "retardataire," prolonging right into the middle of the fifteenth century, long after Masaccio's and Masolino's death, the stylistic ideal already formed by the last followers of Giotto. But he is not exclusively a slavish repeater of the conceptions of others, he does not merely live on what he inherited from previous generations; he developed this heritage on new lines, with new decorative values. For Parri has an independent artistic temperament, a genuine talent, though prematurely broken by sickness; indeed, in his happiest moments he has succeeded in eliciting out of the flowing Gothic play of lines harmonies which have seldom been surpassed in richness of nuances and soft melting cantilena.

SOME WORKS BY PARRI SPINELLI

AREZZO. Pinacoteca Comunale.

Mater Misericordiae with SS. Laurentius and Pergentinus (late).

Fragments; *Angels playing on instruments and Christ in glory* (frescoes) (late).

Palazzo Comunale, Sala di Giustizia.

The Virgin, patroness of the Aretini (late).

ESSENTIALS IN ART

AREZZO—continued.

- S. Domenico.
Crucifixion and two saints (late).
- S. Francesco.
Christ in Simon's house.
Scenes from the life of S. Francis (fragments).
- S. Clara.*
- S. Michael.*
- Sta. Maria delle Grazie.
B.M.V. de perpetuo succursu (repainted).

BERLIN. Prof. G. Voss.

- The Virgin, SS. Francis, Anthony, and two female saints* (early).

BONN. Provinzialmuseum.

- Altar-wing, *SS. Laurence and Mary Magdalen with a kneeling cardinal* (early).

BORGH ALLA COLLINA (Casentino).

- Altar-triptych, *The Mystical Marriage of S. Catherine, two angels and four saints.* Dated 1423.

FIGLINE (Chianti). Misericordia.

- Crucifixion, Annunciation and Coronation of the Virgin.*

FLORENCE. Bigallo.

- Madonna.*

Uffizi.

- (No. 11) *Madonna, four angels, SS. John the Baptist and Zenobius* (early).
- (No. 51) *Madonna and four saints* (early).
- (No. 16, from Sta. Maria Nuova) *Madonna with SS. Francis, Anthony, and two female saints* (early).
- Two small wings, *SS. Francis and Catherine.*
- Department of drawings. (Cf. Reproductions Fig. 44.)
- No. 23. *Female saint with bystanders.*
Verso, *Legendary scene.*
- No. 24. *Ministering angel.*
Verso, *Two women and a boy.*
- No. 25. *S. Francis kneeling.*
Verso, *A city gate.*
- No. 26. *S. Francis's companion at the stigmatization.*
Verso, *A pedestal.*
- No. 31. *Figure with a book* (fragment).
- No. 32. *A saint* (fragment).
Verso, *Naked youth lying on the ground.*
- No. 33. *Standing figure (S. Paul?).*
Verso, *The Madonna, standing.*
- No. 34. *Christ in a Coronation.*
- No. 35. *The Madonna, standing.*
Verso, *Fortitudo, allegorical figure.*



FIG. 44. FOUR DRAWINGS BY PARRI SPINELLI
(Uffizi, Florence)

A LATE GOTHIC POET OF LINE

FLORENCE—continued.

Department of drawings—continued.

- No. 36. *An Apostle*, standing.
Verso, *The companion of S. Francis at the stigmatization.*
- No. 37. *Female saints*, standing.
Verso, *Studies of cliffs.*
- No. 38. *Madonna*, seated, bending aside.
Verso, *Madonna*, standing.
- No. 60. *Studies of saints.*
Verso, *S. John the Evangelist.*
- No. 8 (Scuola Veronese). *Baptism with numerous figures.*
Verso, *Studies of a standing and a seated Apostle.*
- S. Marco, Ospizio.
(No. 6) *Madonna with four saints.*
Formerly Marchese Bartolini-Salimbeni-Vivai. *Madonna.*
Sig. F. Pedulli (1913). *Madonna.*
Sig. De Clemente. *Madonna.*
Sig. A. Corsi. *Madonna* (small).

GÖTTINGEN. Universitätsmuseum.
Annunciation (small).

HELSINGFORS. Athenæum.
Madonna and angels (early):

LONDON. Mr. Charles Ricketts. *Madonna* (restored).
Mr. A. E. Street. *S. Laurence and S. Catherine.*
Mr. Robert Benson. *Two music-making angels.*

OXFORD. Christ Church. (No. 28) *Madonna.*

PARIS. Formerly coll. Artaud de Montor.
Madonna with four saints.
Formerly coll. Dollfus. *Death of the Virgin.*

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.
John G. Johnson coll.
Madonna (early). *Death of the Virgin.*
John D. McKhenny.
Madonna.

PISA. Museo Civico.
(No. 12, Sala V) *Madonna with four saints.*

ROME. Galleria Doria.
Triptych, *Madonna, SS. Anthony, Peter, John the Baptist and Matthew.*
Galleria Sterbini. *Madonna.*

STIA (Casentino).
Assumption.



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